

HB 481 -- PUBLIC FUNDS

CO-SPONSORS: Crowell, Bearden, Rupp, Moore, Ervin, Lipke (157), Smith (14), Muckler, Dixon, Viebrock

COMMITTEE ACTION: Voted "do pass" by the Committee on Health Care Policy by a vote of 11 to 3.

This bill prohibits the expenditure of public funds to existing or proposed health and social services programs that directly or indirectly subsidize abortion services. An entity that is affiliated with another entity that provides abortion services may only receive public funds if the affiliated entity is an independent affiliate. Entities that provide counseling to pregnant women and receive public funds may only provide non-directive pregnancy counseling and may not display or distribute materials promoting abortion services.

The bill requires entities that receive public funds to maintain records that demonstrate strict compliance with this section. An independent audit of these entities must be conducted at least once every three years. If the recipient of public funds is affiliated with an entity that provides abortion services, an audit must be conducted each year to ensure compliance. The bill includes exceptions for reimbursement to entities that provide services that are required under federal Medicaid regulations and certain services required under the federal family planning program.

The bill also prohibits public funds from being expended on existing or proposed research projects that involve abortion services, human cloning, or prohibited human research.

The bill gives taxpayers of the state standing to bring suit against the state or a recipient of public funds in violation of the provisions of the bill.

FISCAL NOTE: No impact on state funds.

PROPOSERS: Supporters say that the bill will codify ethical standards pertaining to the use of public funds for research projects and health and social service programs that do not endorse or provide abortion services. Public funds should not be used to finance human cloning or prohibited human research. The bill requires independent audits of entities that receive public funds to ensure accountability and strict compliance with the bill.

Testifying for the bill were Representative Crowell; Campaign Life Missouri; and Missouri Right to Life.

OPPONENTS: Those who oppose the bill say that another barrier would be established for the already low numbers of health care professionals who provide a full range of reproductive health care services for women and primary health care services for women and men. The provision of these health care services could be disrupted, thus limiting access by persons who do not have adequate health care coverage. If the number of health care providers is reduced and the provision of a full range of health care services is disrupted, the likelihood that other health care professionals who would be willing to provide health care services to persons with inadequate health insurance coverage would decrease.

Testifying against the bill were Sinclair School of Nursing, University of Missouri-Columbia; Kerri McBee; Boone County Health Department; Jennifer Hughes; Planned Parenthood of the Rocky Mountains, Southwest Missouri; Jane Mudd; Brandi Acree; Robin Cornelison; Susan Hilton, Executive Director, Missouri Family Health Council; Alison Barresi; Planned Parenthood of Kansas and Mid-Missouri; Planned Parenthood, Tri-Rivers Region; Planned Parenthood of the St. Louis Region; and National Abortion and Reproductive Rights Action League.

Joseph Deering, Legislative Analyst