

Testimony of Nigel Morton
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URGE: Unite for Reproductive and Gender Equity
Federal and State Affairs Committee
Testimony Opposing HCR 5019

Thank you Chair Barker and esteemed members of the committee for the opportunity to present my testimony.

I am Nigel Morton, the Kansas State Organizer for URGE: Unite for Reproductive and Gender Equity. My testimony speaks on behalf of young constituents in Kansas, from ages 18 to 30. Today, I firmly ask you vote against House Concurrent Resolution 5019 which attempts to restrict abortion access. The referendum that this type of measure calls for will cause harm to young marginalized communities and is not inline with Kansas values.

The purpose of this amendment is to open the floodgates for new, numerous, and dangerous restrictions on abortion in the state of Kansas. An identical amendment was passed in Alabama in 2018, and at the earliest opportunity, legislators banned abortion entirely. We have every reason to believe the same thing would happen here.

Using the state constitution to take basic protections and healthcare away from people is a betrayal of our values and the purpose of our constitution, which is to protect and uphold the rights of Kansans. Supporters of this amendment may try to hide their extreme agenda—but the people of Kansas will not be fooled. In the very near future there is a strong possibility that we will lose federal protection for the right to abortion. If that happens, the Kansas constitution is the only thing protecting the health and basic rights of women and young people in this state.

Abortion must remain legal in the state of Kansas. However we may feel about abortion, this is a personal decision that each of us have to make for ourselves. It is not for politicians to create barriers and restrictions that take away our decisions.

This constitutional amendment is the first step to banning abortion in Kansas, which directly flies in the face of the Kansas Supreme Court decision in 2019. Contrary to what supporters of this bill will claim, abortion is a normal and an essential part of the full range of sexual and reproductive [or pregnancy-related] health care. The decision, if and when, to continue a pregnancy and to become a parent is a decision that should be made with dignity and respect. This constitutional amendment would do the exact opposite of this by creating the first step to banning abortion in Kansas.

Whether a person decides to become a parent, choose adoption, or have an abortion we all deserve to access the support and health care we need and to build the families we want. We

stand for the rights of all people to make those decisions for themselves free from political interference, stigma, and shame.

To be sure, this amendment would harm young people, people of color, and low income folks. This constitutional amendment would unquestionably be followed by restrictions that will make abortion less accessible, more expensive, and even create criminal penalties for a person who decides to end their pregnancy or a healthcare provider or loved one who supports them.

As a young people's reproductive justice organization, URGE strongly opposes HCR 5019. On behalf of our membership of young people across the state, I urge you to do the right thing and vote NO on this harmful constitutional amendment. Don't let extreme politicians or the anti-abortion special interest groups and lobbies hijack our legislative process and state constitution to deny our basic rights and threaten our health.

Thank you again for the opportunity to testify today.