

To Committee Chair Senator Wiklund and Vice Chair Senator Mann, and committee members,

Thank you for this opportunity to submit written testimony in support of SF 0001, the Protect Reproductive Options (PRO) Act. Please enter my testimony into the public record.

I grew up when abortion was illegal and effective contraception was not readily available. As a freshman in college, I saw firsthand the harm of criminalizing reproductive services when a close friend endured a traumatic illegal abortion. In part this inspired me to become an obstetrician/gynecologist. Fortunately, abortion was legal during my time in practice. The government did not interfere with my ability to provide accurate reproductive health information. When I cared for a woman during a miscarriage, I did not have to worry about being arrested or sued by an uninvolved party with an anti-abortion agenda.

This past election cycle I door-knocked for several Minnesota state legislative candidates. Voters, both women and men, frequently voiced their support for reproductive choice. They did not want politicians and the government making those choices for them. Like me, they did not want others' religious views imposed on them.

One of the great features of our representative democracy is the separation of church and state. Many reasons put forth for banning abortion and some of the most effective forms of contraception are based on religious beliefs. I respect people, including state legislators, who hold those beliefs and live their own lives accordingly. But I am appalled by the authoritarian legislative actions in other states that impose those views on everyone, often under the guise of protecting women. It is hard for me to imagine how ob/gyns in these states can fulfill their obligations to patients.

The text of the Protect Reproductive Options Act is clear and comprehensive. As a physician who dedicated my career to helping women and their families, I support it wholeheartedly.

Thank you for your consideration of my views and your service in the legislature.

Susan Cushman, MD

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