

HB 696 -- DISPOSITION OF HUMAN FETUSES

CO-SPONSORS: Rupp, Parker, Smith (14), Davis (19), Dempsey, Bearden, Lembke (85), Nieves, Bruns, Emery

COMMITTEE ACTION: Voted "do pass" by the Committee on Health Care Policy by a vote of 10 to 0.

This bill establishes the Disposition of Fetal Remains Act.

The bill:

(1) Requires that the mother of a dead human fetus determine the final disposition of the remains of the fetus in every instance of fetal death. The mother is allowed to choose any means of final disposition authorized by law or by the Director of the Department of Health and Senior Services;

(2) Authorizes the final disposition of human fetal remains by cremation, burial, incineration in an approved medical waste incinerator, or other means approved by the director. The disposition must be consistent with state law or administrative rules. If the disposition occurs by incineration, the remains must be incinerated separately from medical waste;

(3) Does not require a religious service or ceremony to be held;

(4) Requires licensed hospitals and other licensed health care facilities to adopt written standards for the disposition of human fetal remains. Licensed health care facilities are required to provide the mother a copy of their written standards;

(5) Requires licensed hospitals or other licensed health care facilities to notify the mother within a 24-hour period of her right to determine the final disposition and the methods of final disposition of the fetal remains. The 24-hour notification is required if a miscarriage occurs at the facility;

(6) Requires the licensed health care facility to provide on-site counseling services to the mother or refer the mother to an appropriate provider of counseling services concerning the death of the fetus; and

(7) Requires that persons who violate provisions of the bill are guilty of a class C misdemeanor.

The bill does not prohibit a woman's ability to obtain a legal abortion.

FISCAL NOTE: No impact on state funds.

PROPONENTS: Supporters say that many families are misinformed about their rights to have human fetal remains disposed of in a humane manner. It is inhumane to dispose of a human fetus without a proper burial. Thirteen other states have similar laws and seven states have similar legislation under consideration. Families have the right to be fully informed by hospitals and other facilities about options pertaining to the disposition of fetal remains.

Testifying for the bill were Representative Rupp; St. Joseph Health Center, National Share Office of St. Charles; and Linda Sellers.

OPPONENTS: There was no opposition voiced to the committee.

Joseph Deering, Legislative Analyst