

HB 821 -- UNBORN CHILD PAIN PREVENTION ACT

SPONSOR: Onder

COMMITTEE ACTION: Voted "do pass" by the Special Committee on Family Services by a vote of 7 to 3.

This bill establishes the Unborn Child Pain Prevention Act which requires treating physicians to inform a woman seeking an abortion after 20 weeks gestation that she has the right to review specified information about the capacity of an unborn child to experience pain during an abortion. The treating physician must also offer the woman the option of administering an anesthetic or analgesic to the unborn child. Medical emergencies are exempt from these requirements.

FISCAL NOTE: Estimated Cost on General Revenue Fund of Less than \$3,130 in FY 2008, Less than \$3,758 in FY 2009, and Less than \$3,758 in FY 2010. No impact on Other State Funds in FY 2008, FY 2009, and FY 2010.

PROPONENTS: Supporters say that some methods of abortion performed after 20 weeks gestation are painful to the unborn child. The bill errs on the side of compassion by allowing the unborn child to receive anesthesia to eliminate pain incurred during an abortion. As long as an abortion is legal, pain relief is needed.

Testifying for the bill were Representative Onder; Missouri Right to Life; Missouri Catholic Conference; Campaign Life Missouri; Missouri Family Network; Americans United for Life; and Missouri Baptist Convention, Christian Life Commission.

OPPONENTS: Those who oppose the bill say that it is a notion of protecting a fetus and a woman from pain; however, it is really just a cover for sparking further discussion about limiting or eliminating abortions. Currently, there is no medical consensus on what gestational age a fetus actually begins to feel pain. Anesthesia is risky, and adding risk to a procedure does not sit well with Missourians' values and is unnecessary. Very few abortions are performed after 20 weeks gestation, and the information physicians would be required to distribute is unsubstantiated and misleading.

Testifying against the bill were Planned Parenthood of the St. Louis Region; American Civil Liberties Union of Eastern Missouri; and Janice Barnes, Missouri Religious Coalition for Reproductive Choice.