



Protect the Health and Well-Being of Teens: Stop Congress from Passing the Teen Abandonment Act

“Lisa” was 14 years old and pregnant. She had never known her father and her mother had died. Her grandmother was raising her. Lisa knew that she wasn’t ready to have a child and wanted to have an abortion. Lisa’s grandmother supported her decision. The law in Lisa’s state requires that a parent be notified or that a court waive that requirement before an abortion can be performed. Lisa’s grandmother had never established guardianship, so even though she supported Lisa, they had to pursue a court waiver. At the hearing, the judge scolded Lisa for “killing her baby.” Worse still, the judge denied Lisa’s waiver even though the only adult in her life supported her decision.*

Congress is poised to take away one of the few options people like “Lisa” and her grandmother have: traveling together to a nearby state that does not restrict teenagers’ access to abortion. In the coming months, Congress will likely take up a measure that would make it a federal crime for a person other than a parent – including a grandmother, aunt, sibling, or clergy member – to help a teen cross state lines for an abortion unless the teen had already fulfilled the requirements of her home state’s teen abortion law. It would not be a crime for the teen to travel alone. Named the “Child Custody Protection Act” by its sponsors, the bill is more aptly called the “Teen Abandonment Act.”

Take Action – Oppose the “Teen Abandonment Act”

- **The Teen Abandonment Act would criminalize compassion.** The bill would impose federal criminal penalties on any person other than a parent who transports a young woman across state lines to obtain an abortion if she has not already met the obligations of her state’s teen abortion law. This bill criminalizes caring, responsible behavior on the part of adults concerned with a young woman’s well-being.
- **The Teen Abandonment Act would isolate the most vulnerable teens.** This law would force young women seeking an abortion to travel long distances alone, denying them the assistance of trusted adults. This legislation abandons teenagers who find themselves in trouble and in need of help, by putting an anti-abortion agenda before their health and well-being.
- **Teens seeking abortions should not be denied the help of other responsible adults.** Studies have found that a majority of young women seeking an abortion choose to involve a parent in their decision, but some teens have valid reasons – such as family violence, including physical, emotional, and sexual abuse – for seeking out an aunt or grandmother instead.

- **The Teen Abandonment Act is unconstitutional.** The bill would violate core constitutional principles – the right of each person to travel freely from state to state, and the right of each state to enforce its own laws within its boundaries. It also fails to include a constitutionally required health exception.

To send a letter to Congress opposing the Teen Abandonment Act

https://www.oursybil.org/ASD/home/RFP/TAA_LetterToCongress.doc

To learn more about the Teen Abandonment Act and other federal bills, join the ACLU's Action Network at: <http://www.aclu.org/TakeAction/TakeActionList.cfm?c=242>.

*Lisa is a pseudonym.