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**AMERICAN ASSOCIATION OF UNIVERSITY WOMEN
PENNSYLVANIA DIVISION**

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**Pennsylvania AAUW Advocates Equal Access for Women
Self-Determination is the Foundation of the American Ideal**

Founded in 1881, the American Association of University Women (AAUW) is the first and largest national association advocating equity for women through education. AAUW's membership of more than 150,000 college graduates nationwide supports equity for women, education and self development over the life span, and positive societal change. The Pennsylvania Division of AAUW has over 7,600 members in 76 local branches across the state. The average age of our membership is 56, with party affiliation equally split between Republicans and Democrats.

We are educated, informed and active voters. A July poll taken by Greenberg-Lake: The Analysis Group shows college educated voters to be "the most pro-choice voters in the country. Sixty-nine percent support keeping abortion legal under all circumstances."

In 1970, AAUW's Hawaii Division launched a successful drive to repeal the state's restrictive abortion laws, stimulating AAUW's involvement in other

AAUW Testimony in response to HB 1979

Page 2

states and divisions. In 1971, the Association adopted a resolution calling on members in all fifty states to work for repeal of restrictive abortion laws, making abortion legal for those who wish it after a medical consultation. In 1971, AAUW joined an amicus curiae brief in the Supreme Court case of Roe v. Wade.

Last June delegates to the Association convention continued their overwhelming support of family planning and choice for women with unanimous passage of our complete Public Policy Principles and Priorities without discussion or debate. We are unified and clear on our position. AAUW believes that choice -- self-determination -- is the foundation of our civil liberties and the right of all Americans.

For women, the freedom to determine one's life, live as one chooses and strive to fulfill one's own unique potential, must lie squarely on the foundation of reproductive freedom. We are talking about something personal, private, intimate. Choosing whether, when and with whom to bear our children is the difference between freedom and bondage.

AAUW and its members are deeply conscious of the complexities in reproductive choice and deeply respectful of the strength of individual feelings. If in the past we have not been vocal, it is from respect for individual beliefs.

AAUW Testimony in response to HB 1979

Page 3

No one is comfortable with abortion. But in an imperfect world, abortion is a needed option for some women. One in two single mothers has less than a high school education. Seventy-five percent of female heads of household with less than a high school diploma are living in poverty (AAUW Trends Fact Sheet, June 1989). Four out of every 10 females become pregnant before they turn twenty. More than one in every 10 teenage girls gets pregnant every year. Only half (49 percent) of women aged 15-19 who engage in sexual intercourse use some method of birth control the first time (AAUW Program and Policy Fact Sheet, August 1989).

We question Representative Freind's aim of extending protection to women. An average of 50,000 Pennsylvania women each year choose safe, legal abortion. Since abortion was legalized, over 800,000 Pennsylvania women have made this choice. In 1987, the most recent reported year, patients aged 19 and under accounted for 26.9 percent of all abortions in that year (Pennsylvania State Department of Health).

Most women who choose to have an abortion became pregnant as a result of the failure of their contraceptive method or device (Guttmacher Institute Report). The Pennsylvania Legislature cut off Medicaid funding for low-income women's abortions in 1985. Since that time, both the birth rates and the

AAUW Testimony in response to HB 1979

Page 4

infant mortality rates rose dramatically for that population. Ten Pennsylvania counties have no obstetrician/gynecologists, while another 19 counties have five or fewer. Only in 18 percent of counties are abortion services currently available (Pennsylvanians for Choice Fact Sheet, September 1989). There is a need to foster, not restrict, the availability of reproductive health services for Pennsylvanians.

AAUW is concerned about the invasion of privacy and danger to the security of minors in legislation mandating parental consent. Fifty-five percent of the minors who obtain abortions have already talked with at least one parent, and 75 percent of young women under age 15 have consulted with at least one parent prior to obtaining an abortion (Telling Parents: Clinic Policies and Adolescents' Use of Family Planning and Abortion Services, Family Planning Perspectives 1980). Teens who do not tell their parents about their pregnancies fear for their physical or emotional safety.

Physical and sexual abuse of children and adolescents by their parents is tragically common, and pregnant teens are particularly vulnerable to abusive parents (Children's Defense Fund, 1989). The result of forced parental consent is dramatically increased second trimester abortions. In Minnesota, where a parental notification requirement has been the law for five years, second trimester abortions have increased by 26.5 percent (Pennsylvanians for Choice Fact Sheet, September 1989).

AAUW Testimony in response to HB 1979

Page 5

Since its inception 108 years ago, AAUW has been an advocate of the concept of equal access. Present restrictions on abortions and funding discriminate against poor women, minorities and teens. These populations are denied equal access to information, family planning options and adequate health care. Choice in self-determination is the foundation of all civil rights. In our democratic society, the principle of choice lacks meaning if applied selectively.

The movement which calls itself pro-life in America has not proven to be pro-child. If it were, that movement would work with us to assure that women could responsibly choose to bear children knowing they could secure a future. A movement aiming to prevent abortion would work energetically with us to prevent unwanted pregnancy, instituting family life and sex education in the schools, restoring family planning funding and expanding access to pregnancy prevention clinics.

AAUW does not see the abortion debate as a single issue. The issues involved are complex, with far reaching ramifications. AAUW affirms the basic human right of bodily integrity. A woman's right to control her own body through reproductive choice is fundamental. Without it there is no self-determination for a woman. Self-determination is the basis of the American Dream. Through the choices we make, our efforts and actions, we pursue our

AAUW Testimony in response to HB 1979

Page 6

potential in the fulfillment of the American ideal, "Be all you can be."

Representative Freind's abortion restrictions in the form of "spousal notice" strips women and girls of their constitutional inalienable rights. Representative Freind's abortion restrictions on the "determination of gestational age" interfere with the separation of Church and State by imposing personal beliefs and moral attitudes on a society at large. Representative Freind's "forced parental consent" intrudes on privacy of one's decision making process.

Having returned from a national press briefing on Choice in Washington DC last week, AAUW Pennsylvania Division President Karen Gallagher has made our mainstream, moderate viewpoint nationally known. According to Gallagher, "Abortion is a decision no woman makes lightly. It is deeply personal, based on a wide variety of private and individual factors. It is not an arena for government involvement."

AAUW Testimony in response to HB 1979

Page 7

Our Pennsylvania pro-choice statement: The Pennsylvania Division of the American Association of University Women supports self-determination. The freedom of choice is the foundation of all civil rights. The freedom to make decisions about her reproductive life, within the dictates of her religious and moral beliefs, is among a woman's most basic rights.

Written testimony submitted October 13, 1989 by:

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