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TO: PA. House Judiciary Committee

FROM: Dr. Denise Mindo DeHaas  
*Dr. Denise Mindo DeHaas, Ed.D., N.C.C.*

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RE: HB 1979

Upon reviewing the "Analysis of the Abortion Control Act of 1989" I feel that it is necessary to emphasize the portion of the bill which deals with informed consent. As a counselor in private practice, I have dealt with women who are experiencing severe stress which has been attributed to an abortion experience. While not a well publicized disorder, Post-Abortion Syndrome is a serious psychological disorder which may even become critical - to the point of suicidal ideation and/or attempts.

The women who I have treated have suffered from a variety of symptoms which included depression, anxiety, uncontrollable weeping, extra-marital affairs, compulsive behaviors, drug and alcohol abuse, suicidal ideation and attempts, and inability to form close, loving relationships. Post-abortion syndrome is diagnosed when the woman gives evidence of long-term and chronic stress which can be traced back to the abortion experience. Usually the woman is unaware of the source of her stress.

The symptoms are not usually evidenced immediately following the abortion experience. The women appear to have been conditioned by our society to suffer in silence or to deny the pain. Symptoms may appear eight to 12 years after the abortion experience and, oftentimes, it is only through treatment that the link to the abortion emerges and the healing process is able to begin. Abortion, after all, is a physical event which produces nervous system shock and this must have an impact on the woman's personality. It also appears that the presence of new life activates the woman's psychological and emotional nurturing responses. When these responses are short-circuited by terminating the pregnancy, a psychological trauma occurs.

Most women in treatment have stated that, had they been made aware of the pain and sorrow which follows as abortion as well as the guilt, depression, and other emotional problems, they would not have gone through with the procedure. This graphically illustrates the need for informed consent accompanied by an appropriate waiting period so that each individual may be afforded the opportunity to have all relevant data available to her and to make a decision based on that material.