

Coercive Abortion Prevention Act (CAPA)

Overview

After decades of legalized abortion, much research has been compiled documenting that many women feel forced by others to have an abortion. Women are coerced into having an abortion by a boyfriend who threatens physical violence, a husband who threatens to divorce her, parents who threaten to kick her out of the house or withdraw financial support, or an employer who may imply she will be fired or penalized. Recent news stories reveal that pregnant women were murdered by their boyfriends because they did not have an abortion. It is a most disturbing fact that the *leading cause of death among pregnant women is homicide*.

The Coercive Abortion Prevention Act is a five-bill package that defines as a crime an act, or threat to act, against a pregnant woman as a means of intimidating or coercing her to seek an abortion. Adopting language from Michigan's successful stalking law, specific actions prohibited by the bill include: physical abuse, filing for divorce, withdrawing financial support, or changing an existing housing arrangement. The threat to do any of the aforementioned acts in a repeated or continuing pattern will be considered 'harassment,' and criminal. The second bill details the sentencing guidelines for those convicted of the crime.

A third bill allows a pregnant woman to bring a lawsuit against a person who engages in coercive acts against her. She will have the law behind her to be able to say, "You can't force me, I will sue you."

The fourth bill amends the current Informed Consent law to require abortion providers to screen each woman as to whether she is being coerced in any way to seek the abortion. The final bill details how the screening is to be conducted. If the woman self-identifies as a victim of coercion, this bill requires an immediate 24-hour protection period. The abortion provider then informs the woman of her rights, as well as refers her to a domestic violence agency or the county prosecutor if necessary.

Talking Points

- C Homicide is the leading cause of death among pregnant women. These bills will protect lives and well-being of pregnant women by preventing coercive behavior from escalating into violence.
- C A study at Baylor University, in cooperation with a Planned Parenthood abortion clinic, concluded that all women seeking abortions should be screened for domestic violence and sexual abuse, as called for in this legislation.
- C Many women who have had an abortion say they were pressured into it by their boyfriends, husbands, parents, doctors, employers, or someone else in authority; it was not their choice.
- C The repeat abortion rate in Michigan is 48%. Studies reveal that many women who have repeat abortions also have a history of physical or sexual abuse. Routine screening for abuse or coercion will protect women and could reduce the number of repeat abortions.