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**Testimony of Jack M. Valpey, MD, MPH
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**Submitted to the South Carolina Senate
Subcommittee on Medical Affairs on Senate Bill 84**

March 28, 2007

I am writing as a practicing physician of the state of South Carolina and a member of Physicians for Reproductive Choice and Health (PRCH) in opposition to Senate Bill 84, a bill to amend section 44-41-330 of the 1976 Code. PRCH is a national, not-for-profit organization created to enable concerned physicians to take a more active and visible role in support of universal reproductive health. We are committed to ensuring that all people have the knowledge, access to quality services, and freedom of choice to make reproductive health decisions. We firmly support universal access to safe, effective, and evidence-based reproductive healthcare.

As a physician, I strongly support access to comprehensive reproductive healthcare services for the citizens of South Carolina. Thus, I must strongly oppose legislation that creates an unnecessary burden on patients seeking access to reproductive healthcare services.

The South Carolina legislature's consideration of legislation that not only mandates the ultrasound procedure prior to an abortion, but actually mandates that women view the ultrasound, would set forth a dangerous precedent for women seeking reproductive healthcare services. As a medical professional, I know that abortion is a safe medical procedure and, as such, should be free from political and ideological biases. Mandating an ultrasound procedure and mandating that doctors force women to view an ultrasound is not a practice based in medicine, but a clear violation of the important doctor-patient relationship and an example of the worst kind of political interference.

South Carolina lawmakers can agree that physicians have a responsibility to provide our patients with the best, most comprehensive care possible. External interferences, including government mandates that force doctors to violate the doctor-patient relationship, prevent physicians from providing quality care and leave patients at risk of receiving medically inaccurate information. To ensure our patients' wellbeing, physicians must be able to provide comprehensive healthcare to all who seek our

treatment and aid. Physicians must be able to act freely, unhindered by externally enforced ideological or political ideals to be able to provide the best care possible for our patients. The integrity of science is the key underpinning of a patient's ability to receive comprehensive healthcare and a physician's ability to provide that healthcare.

As a member of PRCH, I find this bill to be a gross violation of the doctor-patient relationship and an ineffective and unnecessary intrusion into a woman's private medical and healthcare decisions.

Mandating physicians to perform an ultrasound before an abortion is medically unnecessary.

- Mandating women to view ultrasound images prior to an abortion is not just unprecedented and medically unnecessary, but is emotional battery and a blatant example of politically motivated medicine.
- As a society, we should trust physicians to educate their patients rather than mandate ideologically driven government interference.
- South Carolina women already face informed consent procedures specific to abortion; burdening women with further barriers to abortion is evidence that South Carolina lets politics trump medicine.
- The lack of exception for women seeking abortion services for pregnancies that result from sexual assault is cruel and unnecessary and forces the doctor to give up his/her role as the patient's advocate.
- Abortion is a valid medical procedure; this bill is a clear example of lawmakers who would rather play politics with women's lives than actually work to improve the healthcare of South Carolina's citizens.
- If the goal of the South Carolina legislature is to eliminate abortion, it should work to reduce the rate of unintended pregnancies through increased access to affordable family planning services and medically accurate sex education.

Abortion is already a heavily regulated medical procedure in South Carolina. As a physician, I know that we are ethically bound to provide information to each patient so that she can make an educated healthcare decision with her family and trusted healthcare provider. This is informed consent. But forcing a woman to view an ultrasound image prior to an abortion, disguised as a benefit for our patients, is simply poor medicine and poor public policy. Its only intended effect is to force women to feel guilty for choosing a specific healthcare option, unnecessarily raise the cost of medical care and allow non-physicians to dictate medical practice.

Some of the bill's supporters may believe this is a valid way to reduce the rate of abortion in the state. It is not. The only valid, medically sound and ethical way to reduce the rate of abortion is to reduce the rate of unintended pregnancy. We know how to do that. Education works. Prevention works. Strong doctor-patient relationships free from government interference work. What doesn't work is challenging women's access to abortion by placing more barriers and legislating shame.

I believe elected officials and doctors share the same goal. We want our patients—your constituents—to live a healthy life. We want to equip our patients with every resource possible so they can make the best healthcare choices for themselves and their families. Physicians cannot in good conscience support any measure that forces us to ignore our medical training in favor of a government-mandated procedure. My responsibility is to my patients. As a physician, I ask you to place science and medicine above politics and ideology. Please oppose Senate Bill 84.