

Oppose the Broad and Dangerous Pitts Bill: WOMEN WILL LOSE THE COVERAGE THEY HAVE

The Pitts bill (H.R. 358), also known as the “Protect Life Act,” is a dangerous bill that threatens women’s ability to purchase private health insurance that includes abortion coverage with their own money and codifies broad and troubling conscience provisions. This bill is another attempt to unravel the health care law while at the same time expanding anti-choice laws that will harm women’s health.

The Pitts Bill Would Prevent Millions of Women from Purchasing Private Insurance Coverage for Abortion. The Pitts bill is an attempt to revive the rejected Stupak amendment, which was designed to eliminate abortion coverage in the private insurance market. The bill prohibits all individuals who receive federal subsidies from purchasing a plan that includes abortion coverage, as well as prohibiting insurance plans from covering abortion if they include even one individual who receives a subsidy. Health care plans will most likely be deterred from covering abortion and since most insurance plans currently cover abortion, the Pitts bill would result in millions of women losing coverage they currently have.

The Pitts Bill Eliminates Abortion Coverage for the Most Vulnerable Women. The Pitts bill, like the Stupak Amendment, limits the availability of abortion coverage for women who receive federal subsidies to three extreme circumstances – rape, life endangerment, and incest – excluding most women, including those who need an abortion due to a serious health risk or a fetal anomaly.

The Pitts Bill Exempts Hospitals from Treating Women In Need of Emergency Abortion Care, Even if They Will Die Without It. The Pitts bill (as noticed for mark-up in the Energy and Commerce Committee) makes a hospital’s obligations under the Emergency Medical Treatment and Active Labor Act (EMTALA) to provide stabilizing treatment to individuals in medical emergencies secondary to the right of a hospital to refuse to provide abortion care. In practice, this means that any hospital can refuse to perform an emergency abortion—even if a woman would die—without running afoul of the federal law designed to prevent individuals from being denied emergency medical treatment.

The Pitts Bill Undermines the Ability of States to Protect Women’s Health. Currently under the Affordable Care Act, health care plans decide whether or not to cover abortion, unless a state chooses to require or prohibit coverage in their state. The Pitts bill, however, prohibits states from requiring any form of abortion coverage, even under extreme circumstances.

The Pitts Bill Contains a Broad and Troubling Conscience Provision Which Goes Beyond Current Law. The Pitts bill expands and codifies the Weldon Amendment, as well as expands other existing federal conscience laws, without providing any patient protections. This includes codification of some elements of the disputed Bush Administration Refusal Rule, such as the ability of employees with only a tangential connection to abortion services, such as a janitor or a receptionist, to refuse to perform their duties.