



Yheskel, Ofirah <ofirah.yheskel@governor.virginia.gov>

Fwd: Topline messages for Northam

1 message

Berger, Gena <gena.berger@governor.virginia.gov>

Wed, Jan 30, 2019 at 5:45 PM

To: Alena Yamosky <alena.yamosky@governor.virginia.gov>, Ofirah Yheskel <ofirah.yheskel@governor.virginia.gov>

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From: **Missy Wesolowski** <mwesolowski@ppav.org>

Date: Wed, Jan 30, 2019 at 5:31 PM

Subject: Fwd: Topline messages for Northam

To: <gena.berger@governor.virginia.gov>

Begin forwarded message:

From: Alexis Rodgers <arodgers@ppav.org>**Date:** January 30, 2019 at 5:20:43 PM EST**To:** Missy Wesolowski <mwesolowski@ppav.org>**Subject:** Topline messages for Northam**Topline messages for Northam:**

- Let's set the record straight: There is no such thing as an abortion up until birth. The idea that this bill somehow allows a woman to have an abortion up to or as she gives birth is flat-out untrue — it's simply not how medical care works, and it's frankly irresponsible to imply that it is.
- Let's be clear -- doctors and patients must have the ability to make the best health care decisions for the patient in the privacy of the exam room.
- Making a decision about whether to continue a pregnancy is a complex and personal decision. Politicians have no place in this process. A patient's health must drive important medical decisions.
- As a physician, I know how important it is to trust my patients and for my patients to trust me. Every person should be able to make the best health care decisions for their circumstance.
- Despite sensationalized and insensitive commentary from anti-abortion extremists, we are talking about circumstances in which the health and life of the pregnant person is at risk. These are complicated medical decisions that families deserve to make in private without political interference.

Tricky Q&A**Q: Can a woman get an abortion if she's in labor? (if possible, answer on background, not for attribution)**

The way politicians and anti-abortion groups are characterizing safe, legal abortion is completely inaccurate and misleading. If a woman is in labor, she couldn't and wouldn't have an abortion. That

suggestion is not only misleading, it's callous. The truth is, abortions later in pregnancy are extremely rare, and are almost exclusively done for reasons of maternal health or severe fetal impairment.

Q: Can a woman get an abortion for mental health reasons?

The way politicians and anti-abortion groups are characterizing medical care and abortion is completely inaccurate and misleading. Physicians must provide their best clinical judgment in treating the whole person. Every person's situation is different and many times there are no simple answers. Making a decision to continue or end a pregnancy can be a complex medical and personal decision. In the end, every woman's circumstances are unique and politicians' judgment should not be substituted for that of a woman and her doctor.

Q: Why can't we have a bright-line rule with some exceptions carved out?

A: Laws that ban the provision of abortion after a certain week with limited exceptions fail to take into account the complex range of circumstances that each woman and her family may face. Simply put, physicians must be able to make a case-by-case determination of whether a fetus is viable. Because each situation is different, we should not deny a woman the ability to make her own decisions in consultation with those she trusts the most.

Bright-line rules with carve-outs can require physicians to ignore the best available medical evidence and prove that the pregnancy falls within the limited exceptions written by politicians, who are not generally medical experts. Furthermore, when politicians draft exceptions into law they are typically too narrow or vague for physicians to have confidence that they would avoid prosecution, even if in their medical judgment their patient fits into a stated exception. Therefore, these laws often effectively ban all abortions after a certain cut-off, even when a woman's health is at risk or her fetus is diagnosed with a severe fetal anomaly.

Q: When does life begin?

Questions about when life begins are personal, and it's just not that simple. For some it's based on faith, for others it's a matter of science or medicine. One thing I do know is that politicians aren't the experts--and it's not an issue that the American people want to be legislated.

Q: If pressed on whether you support/oppose abortion in specific instances:

It's just not that simple. I don't know a woman's specific situation--I am not in her shoes. Ultimately, decisions about whether to choose adoption end a pregnancy, or raise a child must be left to a woman, her family and her faith, with the counsel of her doctor.

Q: When is viability?

The precise date of viability is inexact and may vary with each pregnancy. In a healthy pregnancy, viability is generally reached around 24 weeks. Some pregnancies — no matter how many weeks — will never be viable. We can all agree that it's important for a woman to have medically accurate information about her health and the health of her pregnancy in these tragic situations—and not shaming, judgment and government interference.

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Gena Boyle Berger, MPA
Deputy Secretary of Health and Human Resources
804.225.3048 (o)
gena.berger@governor.virginia.gov