

ABORTION AND THE “LIFE OF THE MOTHER”



What is the “life of the mother”?

In rare cases, continuing a pregnancy can place the mother’s life at risk. A doctor facing that situation should treat both the mother and her unborn child, striving to save the lives of both. Before the 1973 U.S. Supreme Court decisions legalizing all abortions, Michigan laws governing abortion always included an exception for the life of the mother, from 1846 until today. Thanks to medical advances, truly life-threatening situations are even more exceedingly rare.

Why should there be a “life of the mother” exception?

We oppose abortion because the unborn child is a human being; an unborn child has the same human value as every born person. If both mother and child have an equal right to life, then how should law handle the unique situation where a pregnancy threatens the life of the mother? Right to Life of Michigan believes the law should remain neutral, never placing the value of one life over another.

Each unique situation in such a medical dilemma must be trusted to the parents to handle with proper informed consent, weighing the risks to both mother and child. If the condition presents itself later in pregnancy, ending the pregnancy means inducing early labor or a c-section and giving a pre-term child a chance to live rather than performing an abortion. Sadly, if the condition presents itself before the child is old enough to survive outside the womb, ending the pregnancy means ending the child’s life would be an unintended consequence of the treatment for her mother.

What kind of conditions could threaten a woman’s life in pregnancy?

Ectopic pregnancy, infections of the placenta and amniotic fluid, severe preeclampsia, placental abruption, and uterine rupture are some of the least rare examples.

How often do those conditions occur?

Very rarely. According to a study from the pro-abortion Guttmacher Institute, only 4% of women having an abortion cited a physical health problem as their primary reason for their abortion. It’s important to note that study doesn’t distinguish between actual medical emergencies threatening the life of the mother, or other reasons such as not wanting to be pregnant at a certain age, avoiding morning sickness, or other less serious conditions.

What about the “health of the mother”?

“Health” has been defined by the U.S. Supreme Court to mean “all factors” related to the “well-being” of women. All means everything, and everything in life impacts your well-being, so when people talk about “health exceptions” for abortion, they mean abortion should be legal for any reason imaginable.

Right to Life of Michigan rejects abortions in cases where the child is disabled or has a serious medical condition, or the mother has a non-life-threatening medical condition. Because an unborn child is a human being with equal moral worth, their life shouldn’t be ended in situations where the pregnancy doesn’t pose a life-threatening risk.