

FETAL TISSUE DISPOSAL

By Rep. Webster Barnaby, R-Deltona and Sen. Dennis Baxley, R-Ocala

HB 1437 / SB 1984 is yet another bill by politicians seeking to eliminate access to abortion.

This bill is part of a coordinated, nationwide effort to make abortion access more difficult for patients, to harass physicians, and to outlaw abortion.

Abortion providers, like Planned Parenthood, work with patients on a case-by-case basis to answer any questions they may have about the disposal of embryonic or fetal tissue. This bill, however, would force ALL patients seeking an abortion to determine how fetal tissue is disposed of before they are allowed to have an abortion.

These bills do nothing to respect or support a pregnant person's decision; instead, they mandate what a patient must do after having an abortion, regardless of their own wishes. Instead of focusing on these intrusive mandates, lawmakers need to focus on policies that improve reproductive health.

This bill singles out abortion clinics, and, in doing so, stigmatizes providers at these clinics and the patients that rely on them for necessary reproductive health care.

HB 1437 / SB 1984 treats abortion differently from all other medical procedures. The bill makes these distinctions without any medical, health, or safety justification.

By targeting health centers that provide abortion, this bill could threaten access throughout the state. In some communities, funeral homes or cremation facilities may simply refuse to work with health care providers who provide abortion and nothing in this bill would require them to do so. Without these contracts, abortion providers could be forced to close, restricting or even eliminating access in the state.

These laws are about imposing a political agenda on patients and providers, not about improving reproductive health. Politicians should not be putting in place intrusive, cruel, one-size-fits-all mandates that are medically unnecessary. Fetal tissue is handled by professionals in accordance with state law to ensure it is done respectfully and safely. Medical staff currently work with each patient on a case-by-case basis to ensure all their questions are answered.

HB 1437/ SB 1984 is clearly intended to shame a person who has already made the personal decision to have an abortion, and to create hurdles for physicians and clinics seeking to provide necessary health care to people in Florida.

Instead of focusing on these intrusive laws that threaten patients' access to health care and shame them for their personal decisions, we should focus our attention—especially right now, in the midst of a global pandemic, on promoting laws that strengthen the health of our communities, and that support women and their families.