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Testimony of
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in support of AB 427

before the
Assembly Judiciary & Ethics Committee
September 13, 2007

Good morning Representative Gundrum and committee members. I am Susan Armacost, Legislative Director for Wisconsin Right to Life. I appreciate the opportunity to testify in favor of the *Coercive Abortion Prevention Act* (AB 427).

This legislation is badly needed in our state and in every state in our nation to protect women who are being coerced into having abortions against their will.

We are absolutely dumbfounded and in disbelief that organizations who support what they call "the freedom to choose" are not supporting this legislation! You would think that they would support a bill that enhances "the freedom to choose" by making sure that no woman is forced by someone else to have an abortion against her will. If a woman is being forced to submit to an abortion, is that freedom of choice? Hardly!

But according to the advocates of abortion, AB 427 is just an attempt to make it more difficult for women to have abortions. In the case of abortionists performing an abortion on a woman who doesn't want one, it isn't a case of being "difficult"....it is against the law and should never happen!

Some are claiming that Wisconsin's current informed consent law is sufficient to prevent coerced abortions. Section 253.10 of the Wisconsin statutes does state that an abortion may not be performed unless the woman gives her voluntary consent which must be freely given and without coercion by any person. However, there are no requirements under current law to provide the mechanisms to ensure that the woman's consent is truly

voluntary and without coercion.

Given what is at stake, women need information specifically presented to them up front by the abortionist so they are made fully aware that it is against the law for the abortionist to perform an abortion on a woman against her will. If the woman fears she will suffer physical harm from an individual who is coercing her to have an abortion, it should be incumbent upon the abortionist to provide her with the means to seek help and resources.

The abortionist is not currently required to discuss these issues with her. Unless these issues are discussed, the woman has no knowledge of her rights in this regard and the abortionist has no way of determining whether a woman is being coerced to have an abortion or whether she is in physical danger from the person coercing her. This must be part of the discussion!

Assembly Bill 427 requires that the physician who is to perform or induce the abortion determine whether or not the woman's consent is, in fact, voluntary. If the physician has reason to suspect that the woman is in danger of being physically harmed by anyone who is coercing the woman to consent to an abortion against her will, the physician must inform the woman of services for victims or individuals at risk of domestic abuse and provide her with private access to a telephone if she states that she wishes to call for assistance.

Assembly Bill 427 also requires that the physician or other qualified physician inform the woman that she has a right to refuse to consent to an abortion, that her consent is not voluntary if anyone is coercing her to

consent to an abortion against her will, and that it is unlawful for the physician to perform or induce the abortion without her voluntary consent.

It is unfathomable that organizations who claim to advocate for women's rights would have concerns about legislation that would protect women from being coerced into having abortions and that would provide physicians the means to determine if a woman's consent to an abortion is voluntary and without coercion.

Today, you will hear from some courageous women who will tell you their personal stories. You will also hear from representatives of organizations that work with post-abortive women ... many of whom faced coercion to have an abortion. There are others who could not be here today but have presented written testimony to share with you. I have attached their testimonies to mine.

Erin Peterson of Burlington would like us to share with you that when she was on the table for the abortion, she realized she did not want to go through with it. She pleaded with the nurse that she wanted the procedure stopped. She remembers saying, "Please stop. I don't want to do this." The nurse merely replied, "Don't worry, everything will be fine." But everything was not fine. You can read Erin's complete story. Erin would like you to support AB 427.

Terry Baudhuin of Menomonee Falls wants you to know that as a crisis pregnancy counselor, he often speaks to women who are facing coercion from others to force them to have an abortion. One young woman told Terry, "My mother is insisting I have an abortion or I'll be thrown out."

Another young woman told Terry her father said he was giving her no choice but to have an abortion. You can read Terry's full statement. He, too, urges you to support AB 427.

A 19 year old Maine girl was bound with duct tape and rope by her parents and forced into a car. Her parents attempted to drive the girl to an abortion clinic in New York for an abortion. The girl, Katelyn Kampf was able to escape when they stopped to use a restroom. Her parents were arrested and charged with kidnapping.

These are not isolated incidents. The *Medical Science Monitor* reported in 2004 that according to a study of American post-abortive women, 64% of the women felt pressured by others to have an abortion. They are intimidated into aborting through financial, relational and emotional threats.

Assembly Bill 427 is greatly needed. Wisconsin Right to Life urges your support for this important legislation.

Thank you.