

Michigan Section
Office of the Vice Chair
Matthew T. Allswede, MD
Sparrow Hospital Dept. of Ob-Gyn
PO Box 30480
1215 E Michigan Ave
Lansing, MI 48909-7980
Office: (517) 364-2577
Fax: (517) 364-2222
Email: matthew.allswede@sparrow.org



May 17, 2017 House Health Policy Committee Meeting Testimony Opposing HB 4584

I am writing on behalf of the over 900 board-certified obstetrician-gynecologists in Michigan to respectfully oppose House Bill 4584.

Obstetricians and maternal-fetal medicine specialists provide specialized pregnancy care and are trained to provide non-directive education and counseling for a multitude of conditions that have serious consequences for the mother, fetus or both, including spina bifida. This consultative role includes the delivery of pertinent information specific to the woman and her pregnancy to assist her in critical decision-making. The obligatory provision of generic and potentially irrelevant information about spina bifida may serve to confuse women and could lead some to make inappropriate decisions out of fear and misunderstanding.

A common screening test for spina bifida is the maternal serum alpha-fetoprotein (MSAFP) blood test. Under this proposed legislation, a "positive" MSAFP test would obligate physicians to provide a woman the information produced by MDHHS addressing the potential life-altering impact of an open neural tube spinal defect that has not yet been diagnosed. The majority of these positive tests are "false-positives" due to inaccurate dates, multiple gestations, or placental bleeding early in pregnancy. Follow-up testing involving repeat blood sampling and/or ultrasound confirmation of gestational age would resolve many of these false-positives without raising the unnecessary alarm that the required information handout would certainly create.

In the relatively infrequent (approximately 1:1,000) event of a confirmed diagnosis of spina bifida, the unbiased and comprehensive counseling of pregnant women regarding prognosis and therapeutic options is of utmost importance. Because the science is rapidly evolving in fetal therapy options and neurodevelopmental outcomes, the task of maintaining up-to-date, relevant, peer-reviewed written information will be a constant challenge and a financial burden for the MDHHS which will be duplicative of the efforts by dedicated medical societies such as the American Congress of Obstetricians & Gynecologists (ACOG), the Society for Maternal Fetal Medicine (SMFM) and the American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP).

Although well intended, the provisions outlined in this bill would do a disservice to many constituents in Michigan by interfering in the physician-patient relationship that is critical to patient-centered medical decision-making.

We ask the Committee to vote NO on House Bill 4584.

Respectfully,

Matthew T. Allswede, MD, FACOG