



Testimony of the ACLU of Kansas and Western Missouri In Opposition to SB 141

March 21, 2013

By

Holly Weatherford

Program Director, ACLU of Kansas and Western Missouri

Thank you for the opportunity to testify in opposition to SB 141. The ACLU of Kansas and Western Missouri has fought tirelessly against race and sex discrimination. We have also consistently advocated for policies that support a woman's decision making, advance women's health and well-being, and ensure strong, healthy families. The ACLU of Kansas and Western Missouri opposes this bill because it interferes in a woman's private medical decisions, and attempts to write racial discrimination into our laws.

SB 141 purports to be about racial and gender equality, but in fact it is a thinly veiled attempt to restrict a woman's access to abortion care, requiring doctors and health care providers to specifically monitor the reasons women of color get abortions. Even if we disagree about abortion, we should all be able to agree that a Black or Asian woman's personal and lawful health care decisions should not be singled out to be degraded, insulted, and exploited as a political tool. By regulating a pregnant woman's motives for seeking an abortion, particularly with respect to women of color, this legislation would write discrimination into our laws and place physicians in an untenable position, in effect compelling them to engage in racial profiling. The bill's discriminatory impact is not mitigated by its social justice window dressing.

The ACLU of Kansas and Western Missouri is committed to combating racism, sex discrimination, and gender-based violence. These are complex problems that need comprehensive, long-term solutions. Rather than passing laws that target particular populations and insert politics into to personal, private medical decisions, the legislature should devote time and resources to passing laws that would improve the lives of women, their families, and their communities. We should be working to ensure that all women have access to quality medical care, including contraceptive services, prenatal care, and abortion. Because SB 141 requires physicians to provide a different standard of care to women of certain ethnic backgrounds and discriminates against women of color, we urge you to vote no on this bill.