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To: House Health Policy Committee

From: Genevieve Marnon Legislative Director of RLM

Re: HB 5558 & 5559

Madam Chair; members of the committee; thank you for allowing me to submit testimony in support of HB 5558 & 5559. House bills 5558 and 5559 will ban research which utilizes the of cells, tissues, and organs taken from the mangled bodies of aborted children. These bills are long overdue and have the complete support of Right to Life of Michigan. Unfortunately, fetal tissue research has gone on in this state and this country for far too long. For the past several decades, researchers have disregarded the dignity of the preborn child and have instead utilized his body as inexpensive and readily available research fodder. On the one hand, many in the medical community, legal circles, and in the public have dismissed the preborn child as a person worthy of legal protection and inclusion with the rest of our human family. Yet, on the other hand, medical researchers have coveted the body parts of these "non-persons" precisely because of the fact that they are fully human. Fetal tissue research has been allowed to continue unchecked in the state and in this country because of the abortion distortion: the idea that a preborn child is only worthy of love, legal protection, and human dignity if his mother wants him, but unworthy of love, legal protection, and human dignity if he is unwanted.

Until just a few years ago, most people were unaware of the fact that cells, tissues, and organs of aborted children were harvested in abortion clinics around the nation and "donated" to tissue procurement companies. In 2015, when the Center for Medical Progress released a series of undercover videos spotlighting the seedy and disgusting underbelly of fetal tissue trafficking, the average person woke up to the fact that aborted bodies of preborn human beings were be used in medical research. After decades of quietly acquiring the organs and tissues of aborted babies and packaging and selling them to universities, pharmaceutical companies, and the National Institutes of Health, the country got to see firsthand what was going on. After those videos were released, Congress took action and empaneled the Select Committee on Infant Lives to investigate the abortion clinics, tissue procurement companies, and researchers involved in this baby body parts brokering scheme. In addition to a few criminal referrals, the committee recommended alternatives to fetal tissue and/or ethically derived fetal tissue taken from naturally miscarried or stillborn children instead of the exploitation and commodification of aborted unborn babies.

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In the wake of the undercover videos, the Michigan Legislature in 2016 banned the selling of baby body parts under PA 386 & 387; however, the practice of research involving the bodies of aborted infants continues albeit without payment for the specimens but with the promise of grants from the federal government. Researchers at the University of Michigan conducted a study involving 50 fetal livers to see if BPA was discovered in the baby's liver tissue. That means 50 unborn children were aborted and their bodies were donated to researchers by the very mothers who just paid to have their lives terminated. Then they were dissected for ghoulish research – research that could have, and should have, been conducted on research animals rather than human beings.

Of course, the opposition will tell you all about the valuable discoveries made using aborted fetal tissue. They will tell you that millions of lives were saved because of fetal tissue research and the development of the polio vaccine for example. However, what you won't hear is that the current polio vaccine DOES NOT use an aborted fetal cell line in its development or testing. Most lifesaving medical discoveries do not involve fetal tissue research, and in most cases, ethical alternatives exist. In fact, one other interesting fact uncovered by the Congressional investigation is that human fetal tissue is used in a very small number of research programs funded by the National Institutes of Health: ***“Human fetal tissue is currently used by a very small number of scientists, representing less than 0.2% of the total NIH research portfolio.... Thus, despite the repeated claim that human fetal tissue is “necessary” for modern biomedical research, only a tiny fraction of NIH funded research actually requires human fetal tissue. Moreover, even in cases where use of human fetal tissue is warranted (i.e., Class 1 grants), this analysis indicates that human fetal tissue research is less productive and has lower impact on the field, compared to studies from the same laboratories that do not involve human fetal tissue.”***

With the onset of the Covid-19 pandemic and the subsequent vaccine development, people were once again faced with the reality that many vaccines and medications were developed or tested on aborted fetal cell lines. Prior to the Covid vaccine and their ensuing mandates, most individuals had no idea that many childhood vaccines are grown on aborted fetal cell lines. Now, those existing cell lines – as much as Right to Life would like to see ethical alternatives utilized – will not be affected by HB 5558 & 5559. The bills currently before this committee involve the future use of cells, organs, and tissue derived from abortions. These bills will also, sadly, not prevent embryonic stem cell research that is conducted on the tiny developing embryos that are “left overs” from IVF procedures and are donated to researchers. They will, however, encourage the use of ethically derived alternatives such as induced pluripotent stem cells which have shown great promise in developing cures. These bills will also restore the basic Hippocratic Oath to medical research which asserts “first do no harm.” Abortion harms babies. Abortion harms women. Abortion harms society. And abortion has distorted genuine medical research. I urge your support of HB 5558 & 5559. Thank-you.