



Ohio Bans Down Syndrome Abortions

Ohio Governor John Kasich has signed a law banning abortions in cases in which a doctor has made a pre-natal diagnosis of Down syndrome on a pre-born baby. The new law, slated to be implemented within 90 days, makes it a felony for a physician to kill a pre-born baby based on a diagnosis of Down syndrome. Doctors convicted of the crime face up to 18 months in prison and the loss of their medical license. Pregnant women who agree to the abortion, however, will not face criminal charges.



Ohio becomes the third state to implement the measure protecting unborn babies diagnosed with Down syndrome, following North Dakota and Indiana. The Indiana law, passed in 2016, has been blocked by a federal judge, who ruled that the state may not limit a woman's reason for killing her pre-born baby. By contrast, the North Dakota law, passed in 2013, has thus far not faced a legal challenge. North Dakota's only abortion facility, located in Fargo, indicated that its policy of not performing abortions after 16 weeks of pregnancy has prevented a Down syndrome diagnosis from being an issue.

Mike Gonidakis, president of Ohio Right to Life, expressed his group's gratitude to Kasich and the state legislature for their efforts to protect the unborn. "Gov. Kasich has signed 20 pro-life initiatives into law in the last six years," Gonidakis said in a statement. "He is a pro-life champion, and we are thankful for how he has made it clear that we will not permit this kind of discrimination against people with Down syndrome."

He added that "a prenatal diagnosis of Down syndrome should not mean a death sentence. Thanks to our pro-life legislators, we are one step closer to ensuring that Ohioans with Down syndrome are recognized as humans worthy of dignity, just as they are."

Predictably, pro-abortion groups expressed their displeasure over the ban. Jaime Miracle, spokesperson for the Ohio branch of the National Abortion Rights Actions League (NARAL), insisted that a woman's right to kill her baby overrules any efforts to protect society's most vulnerable individuals. "It's not our place to judge a woman and her decision on whether or not to continue a pregnancy for whatever reason it is," she declared.

NARAL Executive Director Kellie Copeland added her voice, saying that "when a woman receives a diagnosis of Down syndrome during her pregnancy, the last thing she needs is Gov. Kasich barging in to tell her what's best for her family. This law shames women and will have a chilling effect on the conversations between doctors and patients because of the criminal penalties that doctors will face."

But Republican State Rep. Sarah LaTourette, who sponsored the House version of the measure, said the staggering abortion statistics for pre-born babies diagnosed with Down syndrome, necessitated a targeted response. "When we hear the statistic that 90 percent of women chose abortion because of this potential diagnosis, there's an obvious problem there," LaTourette said. She added that the new measure is about more than just abortion. "I truly believe that it's about discriminating against some of



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our most vulnerable, discriminating against an unborn child simply because they might have a Down Syndrome diagnosis. That's something that I find absolutely unacceptable."

Marjorie Dannenfelser, president of the pro-life Susan B. Anthony List, noted that research has shown individuals with Down syndrome to be, on the whole, tremendously happy individuals who bring much joy to their families and those around them. "But tragically, mixed messages from society and many in the medical community target them for abortion at alarming rates," she said. "In some Western nations these vulnerable children are even on the verge of being eliminated from society through selective abortion.... In a time of growing acceptance of human diversity and rejection of outdated biases against people with different abilities, such extreme intolerance stands out as a great injustice. We thank Governor Kasich and the Ohio legislature for their leadership and hope other states will be quick to follow their example."

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