

# WOMEN'S LAW PROJECT

Safeguarding Rights, Creating Opportunities

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## **Women's Law Project Denounces Committee Passage of Senate Bill 3**

January 25, 2011—Today, Women's Law Project Executive Director Carol E. Tracy denounced the passage of Senate Bill 3 by the Senate Banking and Insurance Committee. The bill, whose prime sponsor is Senator Don White (R-11), would ban insurance coverage for abortion care in the state health care exchanges to be created in 2014 as part of the federal Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act of 2010 and impose draconian reporting requirements for rape and incest survivors seeking abortion.

"This bill dramatically changes the status quo and will leave women worse off than before federal health care reform took place," said Tracy. "Currently about 80% of insurance plans cover abortion care. Abortion is a necessary component of women's reproductive health care, and should be treated as such."

"The federal health care reform legislation has already settled the question of public funding for abortion," Tracy added. "Pennsylvania exchange customers who purchase a plan that covers abortion must write a separate check for that coverage. Senate Bill 3 is completely unnecessary and serves only to further stigmatize abortion care."

Senate Bill 3 would also deny insurance plans participating in the Pennsylvania health insurance exchange from covering abortion procedures except in cases where the pregnancy was caused by rape or incest, or where the life of the woman is in danger.

"In the Medicaid context, Pennsylvania courts have already ruled that it's unconstitutional to make rape survivors jump through the kind of insulting and burdensome hoops this bill would create," said WLP Senior Staff Attorney Susan Frietsche. The bill would require rape survivors to "personally" report the crime and identify the assailant, if known, in order for their health insurance to cover an abortion procedure.

Tracy pointed to the recently released grand jury investigation of Kermit Gosnell, a doctor charged with murdering one woman and seven infants at his West Philadelphia clinic, as evidence of the need to expand insurance coverage for abortion.

"According to the grand jury report, many women went to Kermit Gosnell's clinic because they did not have insurance coverage for abortion and were forced to compromise their health and safety to obtain abortion care for the lowest possible price," she said. "Senate Bill 3

will impose the kind of severe restrictions on insurance coverage for abortion that drives women to seek out marginal providers to obtain the abortions they need.”

*About the Women’s Law Project:*

*The Women's Law Project, with offices in Pittsburgh and Philadelphia, PA, creates a more just and equitable society by advancing the rights and status of all women throughout their lives. To this end, we engage in high-impact litigation, advocacy, and education.*

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