

American Society of Human Genetics Statement on Clinical Genetics and Freedom of Choice

By a vote of 2,260 to 71, the membership of The American Society of Human Genetics (ASHG) has endorsed a proposal to modify otherwise restrictive abortion bills in order to protect the options of women at risk for bearing children with serious genetic or congenital disorders. The text is as follows:

Model Statutory Language

Regardless of any other provisions of this statute or other laws of this jurisdiction, any pregnant female whose pregnancy has not reached the point of viability and who has been informed by a licensed or certified health care professional that her fetus (or fetuses) is likely to have a serious genetic or congenital disorder shall have the right, among other options, to choose to terminate her pregnancy. This right shall extend to situations where the female is at significantly increased

risk for bearing a child with a serious disorder for which precise prenatal diagnosis is not available.

The following language, which was not voted on by the members of the society, is intended as a suggested general statement accompanying the model language:

Prenatal diagnosis permits individuals and couples at risk for bearing children with serious genetic or congenital disorders to obtain accurate diagnosis of the fetus in utero. In some states laws and regulations have been proposed which would, if enacted, prohibit women from having the choice of terminating a pregnancy in which the fetus is diagnosed with or is at significant risk of having a serious genetic or congenital disorder. The model statutory language approved by the ASHG is its effort to help elected and appointed officials to protect this option. It will be provided by the ASHG to those jurisdictions considering legislation or regulations which would eliminate this option.

This effort by the ASHG on behalf of patients served by its members is in no way intended to support laws that limit a woman's right to choose how to deal with her pregnancy.

Address for correspondence and reprints: Philip Reilly, M.D., J.D., Shriver Center, 200 Trapelo Road, Waltham, MA 02254.
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