

Say NO to a “Culture of Death”

St. Brendan High School

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### Amendment 4 Essay Contest

“I saw those little things...and they had tiny, tiny fingers. And the film said that the baby’s figures could move, that we should imagine them clinging for life, grasping for a chance, the miracle of life. If they had shown anything else except tiny fingers—so thank God they did. Because she was really a miracle,” reflects Waverly Jong, a character in Amy Tan’s modern classic *The Joy Luck Club* (1992). As Waverly ponders if she should abort her daughter, she recounts the moment when she decided to choose life (Tan 1993). Countless autobiographical and semi-autobiographical accounts have captured that moment when a pregnant woman abandons her desire to have an abortion and chooses to become an expectant mother. However, with Amendment 4 on the ballot, abortions will be more promoted and unregulated, leading to less and less motivation to avoid abortions. Amendment 4 proposes radical changes to Florida’s reproductive laws as it allows for late-term abortions, creates a broad “health loophole” and weakens the requirement of a certified physician. However, the most troubling aspect of Amendment 4 is that it does not require parental consent.. Although pro choice advocates claim Amendment 4 protects women’s rights, it also strips parents of their rights and puts young women at risk.

Amendment 4’s elimination of parental consent strips parents of their rights. According to Michigan lawyer Suzanne R. Fanning, parental rights include physical and legal custody, decisions about medical treatment, right to enter a contract, and right to child visitation. Furthermore, these rights are not to be revoked except in extreme circumstances such as abuse, incarceration, abandonment, or substance abuse problems (Fanning). However, Amendment 4

violates parents' rights by eliminating their right to make decisions about the medical treatment of their child. Amendment 4 revokes a parents' rights without an extreme circumstance.

Accordingly, if Amendment 4 passes, it will be the only medical procedure that does not require parental consent, undermining a parent's legal role. According to the NIH, a person's frontal lobe—which controls the decision making process—is not fully developed until the mid-20s.

Therefore, minors will have the power to make decisions regarding another human's life without being fully able to think rationally. As a result, Amendment 4 not only violates parental rights, it also puts the life of a baby in the hands of a person who is not fully able to make wise decisions.

Amendment 4's lack of parental consent also puts minors at risk for psychological and health challenges. According to Zornelia Zareba, professor of the Department of Obstetrics and Gynecology, Center of Postgraduate Medical Education, Warsaw, Poland, an abortion is a traumatizing experience and may result in mental health challenges such as PTSD, guilt, and grief (17). Numerous studies have identified the role of a parent in overcoming such traumatic experiences, so the psychological toll of abortions on minors could be avoided or aided if parental consent was required as parents could help their children determine their best strategy or provide them with more resources. In addition, due to the ambiguity of the Amendment's definition of a physician, minors may have dangerous abortions. If parental consent was required, this would likely be avoided as parents would have a say in such decision and could help determine the best course of action.

The elimination of parental consent in Amendment 4 is a radical change. This puts both parents and minors at risk. Eliminating parental consent encourages the "Culture of Death" St.

Pope John Paul II warned Catholics about. Furthermore, it hurts the fabric of society that is family. Vote no on Amendment 4.

## Works Cited

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