

HB 4087 – Homeless and Runaway Youth

Opposing Testimony

Thank you, Mr./Madam Chair. My name is _____ and I am opposing HB 4087.

Mr./Madam Chair, the intent of this bill seems to be reasonable enough on first glance. The desire to help youth in need is noble and compassionate. However, there are multiple issues that members of my community, most of them parents, have expressed regarding this bill. The bill does not require the attempt of notice, it provides opportunity for minors to runaway for the purpose of nonconsensual procedures, and it creates a slippery slope of removing parental rights.

To begin with, the bill makes no mention of requiring any attempt to contact the parents of the runaway youth. While there are instances when parents cannot or should not be contacted, many parents are genuinely concerned about the wellbeing of their children, and the minimum of a good faith effort to contact them before providing service should be accounted for. However, this bill makes no mention of such a requirement. Instead, evaluation and treatment may be undergone without any consideration given toward the parent's wishes.

Second, this bill will enable minors to run away strictly to be evaluated and treated without parental consent. We have parental consent laws in place because youth are considered under the authority of their parents as they do not always know the full extent to which medical treatment may affect them. A minor may not know about an underlying family medical condition and not have full awareness as to how the procedures will impact their overall health.

This bill is yet a further step to erode the need for parental consent at all. Mr./Madam chair, we already live in a time when the rights of parents are being encroached upon. This bill would simply continue this trend by sending a signal the state can be a better parent than the parent's themselves. While it begins with homeless and runaway youth, I highly doubt that it would stop here. Instead, this legislation opens the floodgates for more legislation removing the need for any parental consent in medical decision making.

In conclusion, this bill may be well intentioned, but it creates far too much opportunity for risky medical practice without consideration for parental rights. Something must be done about the situation for homeless and runaway youth in Michigan, I grant that. Perhaps it should start by identifying why this is such a prevalent problem and start addressing the root causes. But this is no solution. It is a Band-Aid on a broken bone, addressing a symptom of a larger problem while creating more in the process. It is for these reasons that I urge you to vote no on HB 4087. Thank you for your time and I will now welcome any questions.

Article

JP Isbell (February 20, 2023). Michigan News Source, *Michigan Legislators Introduce Bill to Allow Homeless & Runaway Youth Access to Medical Care Without Parental Consent*. Retrieved from <https://www.michigannewssource.com/2023/02/michigan-legislators-introduce-bill-to-allow-homeless-runaway-youth-access-to-medical-care-without-parental-consent/>