

SARASOTA CHRISTIAN CHURCH

Regarding Amendment 4

Summary:

Sarasota Christian Church strongly encourages its members to vote “no” to the proposed Amendment 4 to the Florida state constitution (regarding abortion) on the 2024 ballot.

Sarasota Christian Church joins with the Christian witness dating back to its earliest days in our value for all human life. Our statement of essential beliefs states: “Humans are the pinnacle of God’s creation. Each person is made in God’s image and has great value, regardless of stage of development or physical or mental capacity.” (*Genesis 1:26-27; Psalm 139:13-16; et al*) We believe that God’s Word indicates, and science verifies, that a new human being comes into existence at the moment of conception. Therefore the killing of that human being in the womb – abortion – is a grievous sin.

In November 2024, there is an amendment to the Florida state constitution on the ballot – Amendment 4 – titled the “Amendment to Limit Government Interference with Abortion.” The text on the ballot states: “No law shall prohibit, penalize, delay, or restrict abortion before viability or when necessary to protect the patient’s health, as determined by the patient’s healthcare provider. This amendment does not change the Legislature’s constitutional authority to require notification to a parent or guardian before a minor has an abortion.”

We have a number of concerns about this proposed amendment.

1. This amendment would imbed in the Florida state constitution a “right” to abortion that could not be limited by future legislation (apart from another amendment).
2. The word “viability” is not defined in the amendment. It is defined in Florida law as “the stage of development when the life of a fetus is sustainable outside the womb”, which is generally accepted to be 22-24 weeks of pregnancy. This amendment would make it impossible for a law to restrict abortion before this.
3. The phrase “patient’s health” is not defined in the amendment and creates a large post-viability loophole for extremely late-term abortions, not just in cases where a mother’s life may be at stake, but even to protect her “emotional health.” We care deeply about the emotional health of everyone, but we’re gravely concerned about the use of that as a reason to end the life of another human being.
4. The phrase “healthcare provider” is not defined, which means that not just doctors or medical professionals, but possibly non-medical staff members at abortion clinics could determine that an abortion is necessary for a “patient’s health” (concerns about that phrase above).
5. The amendment does not change any requirements for parent or guardian “notification” before a minor has an abortion, which means it does not require parent or guardian “consent” beforehand. This opens the door to parents being told their minor daughter is having an abortion, but unlike every other medical procedure, not having to give their consent before it happens.

We have great compassion for those who are in difficult situations regarding their pregnancies and who are looking into termination. We understand that many don't make that decision lightly and our hearts break for those who believe it is the right or only option. We look for ways as a church to come alongside and support those in difficult situations and encourage our church family to bring those to us so that we can step in and love them like Jesus. We also know the grace of Jesus is big enough to cover those who have gotten abortions, counseled others to get abortions, or even performed abortions. We long for them to know Christ, experience his grace, and walk in his ways moving forward.

In light of our value for all human life, including pre-born human life, and our concerns for how widely available and difficult to restrict this amendment would make abortion in the state of Florida, Sarasota Christian Church is strongly urging its members to vote "no" to Amendment 4.