

FINAL BILL ANALYSIS

BILL #: HB 1247

FINAL HOUSE FLOOR ACTION:

82 Y's 35 N's

SPONSOR: Rep. Stargel

GOVERNOR'S ACTION: Approved

COMPANION BILLS: SB 1770

SUMMARY ANALYSIS

HB 1247 passed the House on April 27, 2011, and subsequently passed the Senate on May 5, 2011. The bill was approved by the Governor on June 24, 2011, chapter 2011-227, Laws of Florida, and becomes effective the earlier of October 1, 2011, or upon the adoption of rules and forms by the Florida Supreme Court for purposes of incorporating the bill's amendments to s. 390.01114, F.S.

In 2003, the Florida Supreme Court invalidated the Florida Parental Notice of Abortion Act enacted in 1999 on the grounds that it violated the express right to privacy provision of the Florida Constitution. In 2004, the voters approved an amendment to the Florida Constitution to authorize the Legislature to create a parental notification statute notwithstanding the privacy provision in the state Constitution. The 2005 legislature enacted a statute pursuant to that constitutional authority.

Current law provides a means for a minor to receive a judicial waiver of the parental notification. In 2010, those petitions were granted in more than 97% of the cases.

HB 1247 makes several revisions to the parental notification law including:

- Adding a requirement that constructive notice of a minor's abortion must be mailed to the parent or legal guardian via first class mail in addition to certified mail.
- Requiring that actual notice provided by telephone be followed up with written confirmation.
- Requiring that when abortions are performed due to a medical emergency that the physician make reasonable attempts whenever possible, and without endangering the life of the minor, to contact the parent or legal guardian.
- Requiring follow up notification to the parent or legal guardian after an abortion is performed due to a medical emergency.
- Requiring written waivers of persons entitled to notice to be notarized and dated not more than 30 days prior to the abortion.
- Requiring petitions for judicial waiver to be filed in the circuit court where the minor resides.
- Requiring courts to rule on a minor's petition within 3 business days and to provide for a subsequent hearing within 48 hours if the petition is not ruled on in 3 business days.
- Removing the provision finding that failure of a trial court to rule is considered a granting of the petition and requiring a ruling in each case.
- Providing factors for the court to consider when determining a minor's maturity to decide whether to have an abortion without parental involvement.
- Providing that various financial considerations are not to be included in determining what is in a minor's best interest.

This bill does not appear to have a fiscal impact on state or local governments.

This document does not reflect the intent or official position of the bill sponsor or House of Representatives.

I. SUBSTANTIVE INFORMATION

A. EFFECT OF CHANGES:

Background

The Federal Standard

The United States Supreme Court (Supreme Court) has held that parents may not exercise “an absolute, and possibly arbitrary, veto” over a minor’s decision to terminate her pregnancy.¹ The Supreme Court, however, has consistently recognized the important role parents have in counseling their minor children considering abortion. In review of a parental consent statute the Supreme Court said:

There can be little doubt that the State furthers a constitutionally permissible end by encouraging an unmarried pregnant minor to seek the help and advice of her parents in making the very important decision whether or not to bear a child. That is a grave decision, and a girl of tender years, under emotional stress, may be ill-equipped to make it without mature advice and emotional support. It seems unlikely that she will obtain adequate counsel and support from the attending physician at an abortion clinic, where abortions for pregnant minors frequently take place.²

The Supreme Court’s jurisprudence on parental notification statutes has left questions concerning the minimum essential components of such statutes in order to pass constitutional muster. The uncertainty stems from the inclusion or “bootstrapping” of constitutional requirements of parental consent statutes into parental notification statutes.

In order to prevent another person from having an absolute veto power over a minor’s abortion decision, a bypass procedure has evolved for states electing to require parental consent for minors to have abortions.³ In *Bellotti v. Baird*, the Supreme Court struck down a statute requiring a minor to obtain the consent of both parents before having an abortion, subject to a judicial bypass provision, because the statute’s judicial bypass provision was too restrictive.⁴ The Supreme Court explained that in order to be constitutional, a parental consent statute must contain a bypass provision that does the following:

- Allows the minor to bypass the consent requirement if she establishes that she is mature enough and well enough informed to make the abortion decision independently;
- Allows the minor to bypass the consent requirement if she establishes that the abortion would be in her best interests;
- Ensures the minor’s anonymity; and
- Provides for expeditious bypass procedures.⁵

Since the *Bellotti* opinion, the Supreme Court has reviewed parental notification statutes on four occasions.⁶ In its review of parental notification statutes the Supreme Court has specifically declined to

¹ *Planned Parenthood of Central Missouri v. Danforth*, 428 U.S. 52, 74-75 (1976).

² *Bellotti v. Baird*, 443 U.S. 622, 640-41 (1979) (Quoting Justice Stewart concurring in *Planned Parenthood of Central Missouri v. Danforth*, 428 U.S. 52 at 91(1976)).

³ See *Akron*, *supra* at 510-511.

⁴ *Bellotti v. Baird*, 443 U.S. 622 (1979).

⁵ *Id.* at 643-44, (plurality opinion).

decide whether the judicial bypass procedures of parental consent statutes must be present in parental notification statutes.⁷ Instead the Supreme Court has upheld such statutes reasoning that a parental notification statute that includes a judicial bypass provision sufficient to satisfy a parental *consent* statute, must necessarily be sufficient for a parental *notification* statute since mere notification does not afford anyone a veto power over a minor's abortion decision.⁸

Florida's Parental Notice Statutes

In 1999, the Legislature passed the "Parental Notice of Abortion Act."⁹ The act required a physician performing or inducing an abortion on a minor to provide the minor's parent or legal guardian at least 48 hours notice.¹⁰ The act provided for limited exceptions, the most substantial of which were in the case of a medical emergency and when the notice requirement was waived by a judge.¹¹ The act was enjoined before it was ever enforced and was subsequently held unconstitutional by the Florida Supreme Court in July of 2003.¹² The Florida Supreme Court relied exclusively on the express right to privacy provision found in the Florida Constitution to invalidate the act.¹³

In 2004, the Legislature passed HJR 1 to amend the Florida Constitution to authorize the Legislature to create a parental notification statute notwithstanding the provision in the state constitution regarding the right to privacy. The voters approved the amendment on November 2, 2004.¹⁴ The amendment is found at Article X, Section 22 and provides:

Parental notice of termination of a minor's pregnancy.--The legislature shall not limit or deny the privacy right guaranteed to a minor under the United States Constitution as interpreted by the United States Supreme Court. Notwithstanding a minor's right of privacy provided in Section 23 of Article I, the Legislature is authorized to require by general law for notification to a parent or guardian of a minor before the termination of the minor's pregnancy. The Legislature shall provide exceptions to such requirement for notification and shall create a process for judicial waiver of the notification.

In 2005, the Legislature passed a revised version of its parental notification statute which is currently codified at s. 390.01114, F.S.¹⁵ Several provisions of the 2005 act were challenged in a federal district court but were upheld.¹⁶

Judicial Waiver Statistics

Current law includes a provision to track the number of waiver petitions being filed in court and their disposition.¹⁷ Based on data obtained from the Office of State Courts Administrator for years 2006

⁶ *H.L. v. Matheson*, 450 U.S. 398, 407 (1981); *Lambert v. Wicklund*, 520 U.S. 292 (1997); *Ohio v. Akron Center for Reproductive Health*, 497 U.S. 502 (1990); and *Hodgson v. Minnesota*, 497 U.S. 417 (1990).

⁷ *Akron*, *supra* at 510; *Wicklund*, *supra* at 295.

⁸ *Akron*, *supra* at 510-511; *Wicklund supra* at 295.

⁹ Chapter 99-322, L.O.F., later codified as s. 390.01115, F.S. (1999).

¹⁰ Section 390.01115(3)(a), F.S. (1999).

¹¹ Section 390.01115(3)(b), F.S. (1999).

¹² *North Florida Women's Health and Counseling Services v. State*, 866 So.2d 612 (Fla. 2003).

¹³ *Id.* at 640.

¹⁴ According to the Department of State website, 4,639,635 (64.7%) voted in favor of the amendment and 2,534,910 (35.3%) voted against the amendment.

<http://election.dos.state.fl.us/elections/resultsarchive/Index.asp?ElectionDate=11/2/2004&DATAMODE=>

¹⁵ Chapter 2005-52, L.O.F.

¹⁶ *Womancare of Orlando v. Agwunobi*, 448 F.Supp.2d 1309 (N.D. Fla. 2006).

through 2009, in response to that reporting requirement, the courts have granted an average of 95% of the petitions of minors seeking to waive the parental notice requirement.¹⁸ For the 2010 calendar year, the percentage of waivers granted increased to over 97%.¹⁹

Penalties for Violation

Any violation of the current statute by a physician constitutes grounds for disciplinary action under s. 458.331 or s. 459.015, F.S.²⁰ Disciplinary action may result in the revocation or suspension of the physician's license to practice and/or the imposition of administrative fines of up to \$10,000 for each violation.²¹ HB 1247 provides the same penalty provisions for violation of the notification requirements as current law.

Current Law and the Effect of HB 1247

Notification Requirement

Current law requires a physician to notify the parent or legal guardian of a minor at least 48 hours before performing or inducing an abortion on that minor.²² The physician must provide "actual notice"²³ unless "actual notice is not possible after a reasonable effort has been made," in which case "constructive notice"²⁴ must be given. "Actual notice" is given directly, in person or by telephone, to a parent or legal guardian of the minor. "Constructive notice" is given in writing, signed by the physician, and mailed at least 72 hours before the inducement or performance of the termination of pregnancy, to the last known address of the parent or legal guardian of the minor, by certified mail, return receipt requested, and delivery restricted to the parent or legal guardian.

HB 1247 provides that constructive notice must be given by both first class mail and certified mail. In addition, when actual notice is provided by telephone, it must be followed up with written confirmation by the physician and mailed to the last known address of the parent or legal guardian in the same manner as constructive notice.

Exceptions to the Notification Requirement

Current law provides that notice is not required if (1) in the physician's good-faith clinical judgment, a medical emergency exists and there is insufficient time for the attending physician to comply with the notification requirement; (2) the parent or guardian waives notice in writing; (3) the minor is or has been married or has had the disability of nonage removed; (4) the minor has a minor dependent child; or (5) the minor has successfully petitioned a circuit court for a waiver of the notice requirement.²⁵

¹⁷ Section 390.01114(6), F.S.

¹⁸ Office of State Courts Administrator, *Parental Notice of Abortion Act, Petitions Filed and Disposed*, reports dated January 28, 2007; January 30, 2008; January 28, 2009; March 17, 2010.

¹⁹ *Id.* report dated January 24, 2011.

²⁰ Section 390.01114(3)(c), F.S.

²¹ Section 456.072(2)(d), F.S.

²² Section 390.01114(3)(a), F.S.

²³ Section 390.01114(2)(a), F.S.

²⁴ For purposes of "constructive notice," delivery is deemed to have occurred after 72 hours have passed. Section 390.01114(2)(c), F.S.

²⁵ Section 390.01114(3)(b), F.S.

Medical Emergency Exception

This bill does not amend the definition in current law of medical emergency, and provides the same exceptions under the same circumstances.²⁶ Under the bill, however, whenever a medical emergency exists, this bill adds that the physician “should make reasonable attempts, whenever possible without endangering the life of the minor, to contact the parent or legal guardian.”

Current law allows a physician to proceed with an abortion in medical emergencies and requires that the physician document the reasons for the medical necessity in the minor’s medical records. This bill adds a requirement that the physician in this situation provide notice of the abortion directly in person or by telephone to the parent or legal guardian of the minor. The notice must include the details of the medical emergency and any additional risks to the minor. If such direct notice has not been provided to the parent or legal guardian within 24 hours after the abortion, the physician must provide notice in writing which must be delivered in the same manner required for constructive notice.

Written Waiver of Persons Entitled to Notice Exception

Current law provides an exception from the notice requirements of s. 390.01114(3), F.S., if “[n]otice is waived in writing by the person who is entitled to notice.” The section contains no verification requirement to guarantee the authenticity of such written waivers, and so it is possible that minors could provide the physician with forged parental waivers and circumvent the entire notification requirement with a single unverified handwritten note.

This bill requires a written waiver to be notarized and dated no more than 30 days before the abortion. A written waiver must also contain a specific waiver of the parent’s or legal guardian’s right to notice of the minor’s abortion.

Forum for Judicial Waiver

Current law allows a minor to petition for a judicial waiver in any circuit court within the jurisdiction of the District Court of Appeal having jurisdiction over the judicial circuit within which the minor resides. There are five appellate districts in the state with each having jurisdiction over two or more of the twenty judicial circuits statewide. HB 1247 requires a petition for waiver to be filed in any circuit court in the jurisdiction where the minor resides.

Time for Proceedings

Where judicial waiver is sought, current law requires the court to issue its ruling within 48 hours of the filing of the petition. If the court does not rule within 48 hours, the petition is granted by default.

This bill provides that a court has 3 business days to issue a ruling on a judicial waiver petition. The bill also eliminates the provision granting a motion by default. If a court does not rule within 3 business days, the minor may immediately petition the chief judge of the circuit who must ensure that a hearing is held within 48 hours of receipt of the minor’s petition to the chief judge. The chief judge then must also ensure that an order is entered within 24 hours of the hearing.

²⁶ “Medical Emergency” means a condition that, on the basis of a physician’s good faith clinical judgment, so complicates the medical condition of the pregnant woman as to necessitate the immediate termination of her pregnancy to avert her death, or for which a delay in the termination of her pregnancy will create serious risk of substantial and irreversible impairment of a major bodily function. Section 390.01114(2)(d), F.S.

Appeals

Section 390.01114(4)(f), F.S., provides the right of a minor to an expedited appeal of a denial of a petition for a judicial waiver. Due to the ex parte nature of these proceedings, orders granting a waiver are not subject to appeal.

HB 1247 adds a new provision to s. 390.01114(4)(b), F.S., restating that a minor has a right to appeal a denial of a petition for a judicial waiver and adding a requirement that the appellate court must rule within 7 days after receipt of the appeal. The bill adds that a ruling on appeal may be remanded to the circuit court with instructions for the lower court to rule within 3 business days of the remand. The bill specifically requires that reversing a ruling of the lower court must be based on an abuse of discretion standard of appellate review and not based on the weight of the evidence presented to the trial court. In this sense, the bill requires an appellate court to defer to the factual and evidentiary evaluation of the trial judge in denying a petition. Under an abuse of discretion standard, a reversal would not be appropriate where reasonable people could differ as to the propriety of the decision of the trial court to deny a petition.²⁷ According to the bill, the express deference to a trial court's evidentiary evaluation is due to the nonadversarial nature of the proceeding.

Grounds for Judicial Waiver

The current statute contains a *Bellotti* type bypass provision and allows the court to grant a waiver of its notice requirements under any of the following circumstances:

- Where the court finds by clear and convincing evidence, that the minor is “sufficiently mature” to decide whether to terminate her pregnancy.²⁸
- Where the court finds, by a preponderance of the evidence, that there “is evidence of child abuse or sexual abuse of the petitioner by one or both of her parents or her guardian.”²⁹
- Where the court finds, by a preponderance of the evidence, that “the notification of a parent or guardian is not in the best interest of the petitioner.”³⁰

Sufficient Maturity

With respect to granting a waiver on the basis of a minor's “sufficient maturity,” HB 1247 provides several factors the court must consider in determining whether to grant a petition:

- The minor's age.
- The minor's overall intelligence.
- The minor's emotional development and stability.
- The minor's credibility and demeanor as a witness.
- The minor's ability to accept responsibility.
- The minor's ability to assess both the immediate and long-range consequences of the minor's choices.

²⁷ See generally, *Canakaris v. Canakaris*, 382 So.2d 1197 (Fla. 1980).

²⁸ Section 390.01114(4)(c), F.S.

²⁹ Section 390.01114(4)(d), F.S.

³⁰ *Id.*

- The minor's ability to understand and explain the medical risks of terminating her pregnancy and to apply that understanding to her decision.
- Whether there may be any undue influence by another on the minor's decision to have an abortion.

The bill requires a final order on a petition to include factual findings and legal conclusions regarding the maturity of the minor in view of these specific factors.

Child or Sexual Abuse

With respect to granting a waiver on the basis of the minor being a victim of child or sexual abuse of a parent or legal guardian, HB 1247 makes no substantive change to current law.

Best Interest

With respect to granting a waiver on the basis that notification of the parent or legal guardian is not in the best interest of the minor, HB 1247 raises the standard of proof from the *preponderance of the evidence* standard to the higher *clear and convincing evidence* standard of proof.³¹ Also, HB 1247 specifically excludes financial best interest, financial considerations or potential financial impact on the minor or the minor's family for continuing the pregnancy, from what may be considered in the minor's best interest.

Office of State Court Administrator Reporting

Current law requires the Supreme Court through the Office of the State Courts Administrator to report annually to the Governor, the President of the Senate and the Speaker of the House on the number of petitions filed requesting a judicial waiver and the manner of their disposal. HB 1247 adds a requirement that the annual report include the reason any such waivers are granted.

The bill becomes effective the earlier of October 1, 2011, or upon the adoption of rules and forms by the Florida Supreme Court for purposes of incorporating the bill's amendments to s. 390.01114, F.S.

II. FISCAL ANALYSIS & ECONOMIC IMPACT STATEMENT

A. FISCAL IMPACT ON STATE GOVERNMENT:

1. Revenues:

None.

2. Expenditures:

None.

B. FISCAL IMPACT ON LOCAL GOVERNMENTS:

³¹ Black's Law Dictionary describes the preponderance of the evidence standard as "... evidence which as a whole shows that the fact to be proved is more probable than not." It describes clear and convincing evidence as "... where the truth of the facts asserted are highly probable." Black's Law Dictionary 6th Edition.

1. Revenues:

None.

2. Expenditures:

None.

C. DIRECT ECONOMIC IMPACT ON PRIVATE SECTOR:

None.

D. FISCAL COMMENTS:

None.