

# AN ACT

To amend section 2919.121 of the Revised Code to revise the procedures governing a hearing by which a court may permit a pregnant minor to consent to an abortion or by which a court may give judicial consent for a pregnant minor to have an abortion and to require a court to make its findings with respect to such a hearing by clear and convincing evidence.

*Be it enacted by the General Assembly of the State of Ohio:*

SECTION 1. That section 2919.121 of the Revised Code be amended to read as follows:

Sec. 2919.121. (A) For the purpose of this section, a minor shall be considered "emancipated" if the minor has married, entered the armed services of the United States, become employed and self-subsisting, or has otherwise become independent from the care and control of her parent, guardian, or custodian.

(B) No person shall knowingly perform or induce an abortion upon a pregnant minor unless one of the following is the case:

(1) The attending physician has secured the informed written consent of the minor and one parent, guardian, or custodian;

(2) The minor is emancipated and the attending physician has received her written informed consent;

(3) The minor has been authorized to consent to the abortion by a court order issued pursuant to division (C) of this section, and the attending physician has received her informed written consent;

(4) The court has given its consent in accordance with division (C) of this section and the minor is having the abortion willingly.

(C) The right of a minor to consent to an abortion under division (B)(3) of this section or judicial consent to obtain an abortion under division (B)(4) of this section may be granted by a court order pursuant to the following procedures:

(1) The minor or next friend shall make an application to the juvenile

court of the county in which the minor has a residence or legal settlement; or the juvenile court of any county that borders the county in which she has a residence or legal settlement; ~~or the juvenile court of the county in which the facility in which the abortion would be performed or induced is located.~~ The juvenile court shall assist the minor or next friend in preparing the petition and notices required by this section. The minor or next friend shall thereafter file a petition setting forth all of the following: the initials of the minor; her age; the names and addresses of each parent, guardian, custodian, or, if the minor's parents are deceased and no guardian has been appointed, any other person standing in loco parentis of the minor; that the minor has been fully informed of the risks and consequences of the abortion; that the minor is of sound mind and has sufficient intellectual capacity to consent to the abortion; that the minor has not previously filed a petition under this section concerning the same pregnancy that was denied on the merits; that, if the court does not authorize the minor to consent to the abortion, the court should find that the abortion is in the best interests of the minor and give judicial consent to the abortion; that the court should appoint a guardian ad litem; and if the minor does not have private counsel, that the court should appoint counsel. The petition shall be signed by the minor or the next friend.

(2)(a) A hearing on the merits shall be held on the record as soon as possible within five days of filing the petition. If the minor has not retained counsel, the court shall appoint counsel at least twenty-four hours prior to the hearing. The court shall appoint a guardian ad litem to protect the interests of the minor at the hearing. If the guardian ad litem is an attorney admitted to the practice of law in this state, the court may appoint the guardian ad litem to serve as the minor's counsel. At the hearing, the court shall ~~hear~~ do all of the following:

(i) Hear evidence relating to the emotional development, maturity, intellect, and understanding of the minor; the nature, possible consequences, and alternatives to the abortion; and any other evidence that the court may find useful in determining whether the minor should be granted the right to consent to the abortion or whether the abortion is in the best interests of the minor;

(ii) Specifically inquire about the minor's understanding of the possible physical and emotional complications of abortion and how the minor would respond if the minor experienced those complications after the abortion;

(iii) Specifically inquire about the extent to which anyone has instructed the minor on how to answer questions and on what testimony to give at the hearing.

¶ (b) If the minor or her counsel fail to appear for a scheduled hearing,

jurisdiction shall remain with the judge who would have presided at the hearing.

(3) If the court finds by clear and convincing evidence that the minor is sufficiently mature and well enough informed to decide intelligently whether to have an abortion, the court shall grant the petition and permit the minor to consent to the abortion.

If the court finds by clear and convincing evidence that the abortion is in the best interests of the minor, the court shall give judicial consent to the abortion, setting forth the grounds for its finding.

If the court does not make either of the findings specified in division (C)(3) of this section, the court shall deny the petition, setting forth the grounds on which the petition is denied.

The court shall issue its order not later than twenty-four hours after the end of the hearing.

(4) No juvenile court shall have jurisdiction to rehear a petition concerning the same pregnancy once a juvenile court has granted or denied the petition.

(5) If the petition is granted, the informed consent of the minor, pursuant to a court order authorizing the minor to consent to the abortion, or judicial consent to the abortion, shall bar an action by the parents, guardian, or custodian of the minor for battery of the minor against any person performing or inducing the abortion. The immunity granted shall only extend to the performance or inducement of the abortion in accordance with this section and to any accompanying services that are performed in a competent manner.

(6) An appeal from an order issued under this section may be taken to the court of appeals by the minor. The record on appeal shall be completed and the appeal perfected within four days from the filing of the notice of appeal. Because the abortion may need to be performed in a timely manner, the supreme court shall, by rule, provide for expedited appellate review of cases appealed under this section.

(7) All proceedings under this section shall be conducted in a confidential manner and shall be given such precedence over other pending matters as will ensure that the court will reach a decision promptly and without delay.

The petition and all other papers and records that pertain to an action commenced under this section shall be kept confidential and are not public records under section 149.43 of the Revised Code.

(8) No filing fee shall be required of or court costs assessed against a person filing a petition under this section or appealing an order issued under

this section.

(9) Nothing in division (C) of this section shall constitute a waiver of any testimonial privilege provided under the Revised Code or at common law.

(D) It is an affirmative defense to any civil, criminal, or professional disciplinary claim brought under this section that compliance with the requirements of this section was not possible because an immediate threat of serious risk to the life or physical health of the minor from the continuation of her pregnancy created an emergency necessitating the immediate performance or inducement of an abortion.

(E) Whoever violates division (B) of this section is guilty of unlawful abortion, a misdemeanor of the first degree. If the offender previously has been convicted of or pleaded guilty to a violation of this section, unlawful abortion is a felony of the fourth degree.

(F) Whoever violates division (B) of this section is liable to the pregnant minor and her parents, guardian, or custodian for civil, compensatory, and exemplary damages.

SECTION 2. That existing section 2919.121 of the Revised Code is hereby repealed.

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*Speaker* \_\_\_\_\_ *of the House of Representatives.*

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*President* \_\_\_\_\_ *of the Senate.*

Passed \_\_\_\_\_, 20\_\_\_\_

Approved \_\_\_\_\_, 20\_\_\_\_

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*Governor.*

Am. H. B. No. 63

129th G.A.

The section numbering of law of a general and permanent nature is complete and in conformity with the Revised Code.

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*Director, Legislative Service Commission.*

Filed in the office of the Secretary of State at Columbus, Ohio, on the \_\_\_ day of \_\_\_\_\_, A. D. 20\_\_\_\_.

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*Secretary of State.*

File No. \_\_\_\_\_ Effective Date \_\_\_\_\_