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Another Voice/New York Constitution

Another Voice: New York's Equal Rights Amendment will deprive parents of their role

Michele Sterlace

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In less than 7 months, the so-called Equal Rights Amendment (ERA) will be on the ballot in NY. This controversial amendment to the New York State Constitution detrimentally impacts children and families.

Proponents of the ERA **claim** they're most concerned about protecting reproductive rights, that the amendment is all about "abortion access." NY's ERA, however, goes much further. The amendment includes the fundamental right for minor children to obtain abortions, including chemical and second and third trimester abortions, as well as a child's fundamental right to engage in transgender medical interventions.



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Despite the extreme vagueness of the **ERA**, it clearly elevates “reproductive healthcare” and “gender identity” and “gender expression” to fundamental rights status for all persons, which include minor children. Fundamental rights are afforded a high level of **judicial scrutiny**; meaning that many regulations or common sense standards including parental notice or consent for minors to obtain **abortions** or **transgender medical interventions** may be thrown to the wayside.

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Evidence of the push to erode parental rights in N.Y. can be readily seen in **NYSED's Guidelines for Transgender and Gender Expansive Students**, which allows schools to assist students gender transition without even notifying parents. Regarding abortion, NY has never had a parental consent or notification law, and probably never will- even for later-term abortions, if the ERA passes.

NY's ERA provides courts and schools with more power than parents in significant areas. It threatens to deprive parents of crucial opportunities to help their kids navigate the most difficult circumstances their minor child may face; an unplanned pregnancy or gender confusion. New Yorkers should be alarmed; demanding to know and understand the impacts of any proposed amendment to the state constitution, particularly one that affords rights to children undergirded by shaky, hollow evidence.

Even the **Guttmacher Institute**, Planned Parenthood’s research arm, states further study of the “potential risks and benefits” of abortions on minors “is needed.” According to N.Y.’s most recently published **vital statistics** on abortion over a five-year period, more than 6,000 abortions occur on females 20 years old and younger, on average annually. Thousands of those undergoing these abortions are minors 17 years old and younger.

Studies on the impacts of transgender medical interventions on minors are even more sparse. **Europe** is turning away from providing youth with transgender interventions, acknowledging that the **evidence** claiming the benefits of youth gender treatments is “built on shaky foundations.”

It’s time we move forward, not backwards, regarding rights. Until we recognize the paramount role of parenthood, all people are at risk of exploitation. The so-called ERA exploits children and degrades parents.

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