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Chairman Joseph Castellano
Deputy Chair Toni Addonizio:
Putnam County Legislature
40 Gleneida Avenue
Carmel, New York 10512

March 28, 2019

Chairman Castellano and Deputy Chair Addonizio:

I am writing to correct a misrepresentation of my work that has been submitted in support of resolution for repeal of the Reproductive Health Act. The resolution incorrectly uses my study, *Who seeks abortions at or after 20 weeks?* An article published in *Perspectives on Sexual and Reproductive Health* in December 2013 (PMID: 24188634). Ms. Nacerino writes,

WHEREAS, as reported by Diana Greene Foster of the University of California, San Francisco - the lead investigator on the largest-ever study of women seeking late-term abortions: 1) fetal abnormalities "make up a small minority of later abortions"; 2) abortions prompted by threats to the health of the mother are even rarer; and 3) women's reasons for late-term abortions include many not related to rational conceptions of "health," including travel considerations, expense, indecision, and disagreements with the father;

The Resolution is correct that I lead the Turnaway Study, the largest study of women who have sought later abortions in the United States. However, this study excludes women who seek abortion for fetal anomaly and life endangerment. So the data on why women seek later abortions cannot be used to determine the relative frequency of these indications for abortion. The statement cited by the resolution, which is in the introduction of the paper and is not part of the results of this study, has been incorrectly interpreted. My statement was that among abortions sought after 20 weeks of pregnancy, the vast majority occur close to 20 weeks because there is a precipitous drop in the number of women seeking abortion with each week of pregnancy. So if abortions are banned after 20 weeks, most of those affected would be close to 20-24 weeks. And among those abortions, the limited data suggest that most are not due to fetal or maternal indications. However, even for this period from 20-24 weeks, the data available to myself and other researchers tend to come from stand-alone abortion facilities and therefore likely undercount abortions performed in hospitals, which may be more likely to perform abortions for these maternal and fetal health reasons.

My paper is about abortions at 20 weeks up to the end of the second trimester. It has no relevance to the third trimester abortions that are the focus of the New York Reproductive Health Act. My article was intended to increase understanding of the circumstances of women who have abortions after 20 weeks and within the second trimester. There is no evidence that women seeking abortions in the third trimester are just like those in the second trimester. It is unfortunate that my study was used to support criticisms of a bill that aims to improve access to medical care for women in the third trimester.

The results of the Turnaway Study indicate that denying women access to wanted abortions has negative effects on their physical health¹, economic wellbeing² and the health and development of their existing children³. The results of this study strongly indicate that the wellbeing of women, children and families is strengthened when women are able to terminate unwanted pregnancies, consistent with the intentions of the Reproductive Health Act.

Sincerely,



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CC: Diane Schonfeld, Clerk
Diane E. Trabulsy, Deputy Clerk

¹ Gerdts C, Dobkin L, Foster DG, Schwarz EB. Side Effects, Physical Health Consequences, and Mortality Associated with Abortion and Birth after an Unwanted Pregnancy. *Womens Health Issues*. 2016 Jan-Feb; 26(1):55-9. PMID: 26576470

² Foster DG, Biggs MA, Ralph L, Gerdts C, Roberts S, Glymour MM. Socioeconomic Outcomes of Women Who Receive and Women Who Are Denied Wanted Abortions in the United States. *Am J Public Health*. 2018 Mar; 108(3):407-413. PMID: 29345993. PMCID: PMC5803812

³ Foster DG, Raifman SE, Gipson JD, Rocca CH, Biggs MA. Effects of Carrying an Unwanted Pregnancy to Term on Women's Existing Children. *J Pediatr*. 2018 Oct 22.