April 4, 2008

Norman F. Gant, MD.
Executive Director
American Board of Obstetricians and Gynecologists
2915 Vine St.
Dallas, TX 75204

Kenneth L.Noller, MD, MS,
President
The American College of Obstetricians and Gynecology
409 12th Street, NW
Washington, DC 20090-6920

Dear Drs. Gant and Noller,

As the nation's largest public policy women's organization, and as patients of obstetricians and gynecologists, we have great concern that our ability to choose doctors we trust will be severely limited or become non-existent due to an opinion by ACOG.

Many women, and virtually all of our members (approximately 500,000), select their doctor by the values they hold highest. Chief among them is the sanctity of life. Many women, especially as they are nurturing their son or daughter within them, need to fully trust that their doctor will treat their baby with the same concern and care as they provide other patients.

How can a woman trust a doctor to determine the best care for the child she is carrying if that doctor will destroy a baby at the request of a patient? That is the question that drives many women to choose only obstetricians and gynecologists that will not commit abortion, nor refer for a child to be aborted.

However, ACOG Committee Opinion, Number 385, titled "The Limits of Conscientious Refusal in Reproductive Medicine" would deny women this ability. This opinion claims it is unethical or violates the standard of care for an obstetrician and gynecologist not to commit abortion or refer for abortions, and doctors "with moral or religious objections should … practice in proximity to individuals who do not share their views."

Shortly after ACOG's Opinion was released, ABOG's 2008 Maintenance of Certification Bulletin declared that physicians may lose their certification for "violation of ABOG or ACOG rules and/or ethics principles…"

If followed to its logical conclusion, obstetricians and gynecologists who respect the life of unborn children and refuse to destroy them at the request of a patient, or is unable or unwilling to relocate to be near an abortionist, would be considered in violation of ACOG's opinion and possibly driven out of practice.

In the name of women's choice, this would leave us – women who more than *want* these professionals as our doctor, we *need* pro-life doctors in order to fully trust ourselves to their care – with no choice. Women who do not live near a doctor who commits abortions would also be denied access to a pro-life doctor, since under ACOG's Opinion pro-life doctors would have to relocate.

The ACOG Committee Opinion neglects to consider patients who choose doctors who will not commit or refer for abortions. And this includes patients who may be personally "pro-choice" but, for a variety of reasons, want their own doctor to hold the highest of ethical standards that treat all human beings with equal respect. Women who have had difficult pregnancies, or unable previously to get pregnant, are especially sensitive that their doctors respect the life within them and do not treat their child as disposable.

We entreat you to disavow ACOG Committee Opinion, Number 385, on "The Limits of Conscientious Refusal in Reproductive Medicine," and affirm the right of obstetricians and gynecologists not to commit abortions or refer for abortions, and to be free to practice where they choose and where needed by patients. While no doctor as yet has been denied certification for their moral or ethical beliefs on abortion, these documents taken together have set a new standard. We seek assurance that both ACOG and ABOG specifically reject the views in ACOG's Committee Opinion, Number 385.

Sincerely,

Wendy Wright

Wendy Wright
President