



OFFICE OF ILLINOIS STATE TREASURER

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Treasurer Frerichs: Congressional Tax Plans Would Assign Social Security Number to a Fetus

Opens Door to Undermining a Women's Right to Choose

Treasurer's 529 College Savings Should Not be Part of Debate

CHICAGO – Illinois State Treasurer Michael Frerichs today condemned Congressional Republicans for quietly inserting language into tax reform legislation that would allow a fetus to receive a social security number, a long-time goal of anti-choice advocates who believe such an action can help overturn *Roe v. Wade*.

Frerichs also called upon Republican Gov. Bruce Rauner to lobby Illinois' Congressional delegation to eliminate this attempt to grant personhood to a fetus under the crass disguise that it makes it easier for families to save for college. Rauner has said that he is speaking with unnamed federal officials regarding the tax plan.

“Congressional Republicans hope the barking of a false tax cut will hide their attempts to undermine a woman's right to choose,” Frerichs said. “Abortion is a deeply personal decision and treating it as a slight-of-hand parlor game diminishes women and disrespects their right to self-determination.”

The House tax plan, written exclusively by Republicans behind closed doors, includes language that would allow a 529 college savings plan to be opened for a fetus at any stage of development inside a woman's womb. IRS rules currently require a 529 beneficiary to have a social security number. Therefore, if the in utero language stays in the proposal, Republicans will have created a path to grant personhood to the unborn.

“The Republican proposal to assign a social security number to an unborn fetus addresses a problem that does not exist,” Frerichs said.

Currently, an individual can open a 529 college savings account without immediately naming a beneficiary by using their own social security number. Later, the account owner can transfer it to a family member using the newly named beneficiary's social security number. This has been allowable since its inception in 1997.

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Among Frerichs' duties as treasurer is to manage and serve as the sole trustee of Illinois' two award-winning 529 college savings programs. The Bright Start and Bright Directions investments have more than 450,000 beneficiaries with a value exceeding \$10 billion. Each is considered among the best in the country, according to an independent analysis by Morningstar.

Bright Start and Bright Directions are investment programs and should not be confused with College Illinois!, a pre-paid college tuition program also under the 529 umbrella that is managed by Gov. Rauner.

Standing with Frerichs today was Terry Cosgrove of Personal PAC and Paula Thornton Greear of Planned Parenthood. Each called upon Gov. Rauner to use his influence with Illinois' Congressional Republicans to strip the personhood language from the bill.

"This insensitive maneuver is a needless attack on women that not only would threaten reproductive freedom, but also could call into question the legality of commonly used birth controls," Cosgrove said.

"The only purpose for this language can be to advance a relentless agenda to undermine access to safe, legal abortion by furthering notions of "personhood" through the tax code and other legislative vehicles," Thornton Greear said. "In fact, this benefit for pregnant, and even non-pregnant, people already exists; they are simply changing the language of a benefit to build a foundation toward their goal of banning abortion. And we aren't having it."

About the Illinois Treasurer

The Illinois Treasurer is the state's chief investment officer and Frerichs is a Certified Public Finance Officer. He protects consumers by encouraging savings plans for college or trade school, increasing financial education among all ages, and removing barriers to a secure retirement. As the state's Chief Investment Officer, he actively manages approximately \$25 billion. The portfolio includes \$13 billion in state funds, \$7 billion in college savings plans and \$5 billion on behalf of local and state governments. The investment approach is cautious to ensure the preservation of capital and returns \$28 to the state for every \$1 spent in operations. The Treasurer's Office predates Illinois incorporation in 1818. Voters in 1848 chose to make it an elected office.

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