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Ohio Bill Would Ban Abortion if Down Syndrome Is Reason

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Opening a new front in the abortion wars, abortion opponents are pushing Ohio to make it illegal for a doctor to perform an abortion if a woman is terminating her pregnancy to avoid having a baby with Down syndrome.

The legislature is expected to approve the measure this fall because lawmakers endorsed by the National Right to Life Committee, which supports the bill, make up more than two-thirds of both houses.

Gov. John R. Kasich, a Republican who is running for president, opposes abortion but has not yet taken a position on this bill. Since his election in 2010, he has signed a variety of abortion restrictions, including a law requiring women to have an ultrasound and be offered a chance to see an image of the fetus before undergoing the procedure.

Mike Gonidakis, the president of Ohio Right to Life, said his group had made the bill here a legislative priority because Down syndrome is so recognizable, so easily diagnosed in pregnancy — and so likely to lead to abortion.

"We all want to be born perfect, but none of us are, and everyone has a right to live, perfect or not," he said. "You go to any supermarket or mall and see these families who just happen to have a child with Down syndrome, and they will tell you how fortunate they are to have those children. Pretty soon, we're going to find the gene for autism. Are we going to abort for that, too?"

But abortion rights lawyers say such a law would violate the Supreme Court's *Roe v. Wade* decision, which guarantees a woman's right to seek an abortion until the fetus is viable. They also say that by focusing on the diagnosis of a fetal condition, it edges toward recognizing the fetus as a person, setting up a conflict between the mother's interests and those of the fetus.

Between 60 and 90 percent of fetal Down syndrome diagnoses lead to abortion, according to an academic article reviewing research studies from 1995 to 2011 on the percentage of women who choose to terminate their

pregnancies.

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