



Office of the Speaker
THERESE M. TERLAJE

I Mina'trentai Sais na Liheslaturan Guåhan | 36th Guam Legislature
Committee on Health, Land, Justice and Culture

Statement from Health Committee Chairperson Therese M. Terlaje on the status of the Bill No. 291-36 (LS) Committee Report

FOR IMMEDIATE PRESS RELEASE: (May 18, 2022 – Hagåtña, Guam) Speaker Therese Terlaje stated, “As the Chairperson of the Committee on Health, regardless of my personal views on the issue of abortion and this bill, I have carried through with my duty to create a fair and accurate record of all the testimony on Bill 291, for any subsequent legislative deliberation and debate on this bill, and so that senators contemplating any further action on the bill can be fully informed by the public hearing.”

The Committee Report for Bill No. 291-36 (LS)– *“Relative to Abortion, including abortion after detection of an unborn child’s heartbeat; authorizing a private civil right of action, introduced by Senator Telena C. Nelson, Senator Amanda L. Shelton, Senator Christopher Dueñas, and Senator Frank Blas Jr.,”* was sent to committee members for their vote at 7:00 a.m. today. As of 3:30 p.m., only two votes have been received, none of which are from the three bill sponsors that sit on the Health Committee.

The report for Bill No. 291-36 (LS) holds more than 2000 pages and outlines the intervening circumstances of the leaked Supreme Court decision and the resulting complicated issue of the 1990 law (PL 20-134), amongst other relative documentation. The committee report more importantly includes as official record, an overwhelming eight-hundred and eighty-one (881) written testimonies against and two-hundred and eighty-four (284) in favor of the bill. It is required that the Committee Report for Bill No. 291-36 be reported out of committee, for there to be a permanent legislative record of this testimony and so that there can be deliberation on this divisive issue by all senators, to all be held accountable.

Bill 291 was removed today from the May session agenda “potential items” listing by a vote during the Committee on Rules meeting, including two co-sponsors of the bill, Senator Amanda Shelton and Senator Frank Blas, Jr. The prime sponsor Senator Nelson was not present and is on military duty until tomorrow. This vote temporarily prevents action on the bill.

“Absent withdrawal of the bill, a vote blocking the bill from the agenda merely puts it off for another day when conditions are more favorable to the sponsors. For example, one of the largest concerns stated at the public hearing, was that this bill was timed prior to the election. Placement of this bill on the agenda closer to the election may be the strategy. Unfortunately, that prolongs a very painful and divisive debate, as we have seen to be the goal in some states. I do not want that for our community,” stated Speaker Terlaje.

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