WHEREAS, self-induced abortion is a deliberate termination of pregnancy performed by the woman herself or with the help of non-medical assistance; and

WHEREAS, nearly half of the pregnancies in the United States are unintended; and

WHEREAS, unintended pregnancies in the United States are most common among women and girls of low income, especially those who are below the federal poverty level; and

WHEREAS, more than 700,000 Google searches were performed looking into self-induced abortions in 2015; and

WHEREAS, unintended pregnancy may be the driving factor behind internet searches related to self-induced abortion; and

WHEREAS, a study with 1,235 respondents found that 73% of those individuals searching for self-induced abortion indicated that they were pregnant and did not want to be, and 11% of those respondents reported that they had ever attempted to self-induce an abortion; and

WHEREAS, a variety of factors may serve as barriers to the utilization of abortion care including, but not limited to, financial constraints, state or clinic restrictions, and travel-related logistical issues; and

WHEREAS, the World Health Organization (WHO) states that “nearly every abortion death and disability could be prevented through sexuality education, use of effective contraception, provision of safe and legal induced abortion, and timely care for complications;” and

WHEREAS, the American Medical Association (AMA) policy H-5.980 opposes the criminalization of self-induced abortion, as does the American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists (ACOG) in the position statement on the matter; and

WHEREAS, the Massachusetts Medical Society states support of advocating against any legislative efforts that criminalize self-induced abortion; and

WHEREAS, the WHO defines an “unsafe abortion” as a “procedure for terminating an unwanted pregnancy either by persons lacking the necessary skills or in an environment lacking the minimal medical standards, or both,” which encompasses self-induced abortion; and
WHEREAS, part of the WHO’s reproductive health strategy published in 2004 outlines that most maternal deaths arise from complications during childbirth, the postpartum period, or after unsafe abortions11; and

WHEREAS, as a 2014 study estimates that 2% of abortion patients had attempted a self-induced abortion at some point8; and

WHEREAS, there are estimates that show in certain states as many as 100,000 women may have attempted to self-induce an abortion12; and

WHEREAS, abortions managed by appropriately licensed and skilled practitioners carry risk, like any medical procedure, such as infection hemorrhage, or damage to the uterus and other organs13; and

WHEREAS, the criminalization of self-induced abortions may directly impact patient care by leading to increased suspicion of patients presenting to healthcare providers for miscarriages, potentially reducing the likelihood of patients seeking needed treatment14; and

WHEREAS, self-induced abortions without appropriate medical supervision would be subject to the same, if not greater, risk; and

WHEREAS, a report from the SIA legal team shows that Arizona, Delaware, Idaho, Nevada, New York, Oklahoma and South Carolina have laws on record with language that directly criminalizes self-induced abortion15; and

WHEREAS, prosecutorial overreach may be used to press criminal charges against patients who have participated in self-induced abortion; and

WHEREAS, patients who have attempted to self-induce an abortion may be less prone to access the healthcare system regarding complications due to fear of legal retribution; now, therefore be it

RESOLVED, that the American Osteopathic Association stand in support of the decriminalization of self-induced abortions along with legislative efforts to support that goal, and oppose legislation that criminalizes self-induced abortion on the basis that these criminalization efforts may increase our patient’s medical risk and threaten their well-being.

References


Explanatory Statement

ACTION TAKEN ____________________

DATE ___________________________