

# Abortion bill clears key hurdle in Florida

Parental consent measure awaits state House approval

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ASSOCIATED PRESS

TALLAHASSEE — Republican lawmakers in Florida moved closer to enacting legislation to require parental consent before a minor can get an abortion, clearing a key hurdle Thursday in the state Legislature.

After a civil but passionate hourlong debate, the Senate voted 23-17 along party lines to endorse the measure, which now awaits action in the state House. Gov. Ron DeSantis, a Republican, has said he supports the effort in the GOP-led Legislature.

Florida would join 26 other states in requiring at least one parent give written permission authorizing a doctor to terminate the pregnancy of a minor. Doctors who perform abortions without the parental consent of a girl under 18 would face up to five years in prison for a third-degree felony.

"This is not a pro-choice, pro-life bill," said Kelli Stargel,



AP PHOTO BY TORI LYNN SCHNEIDER

**Sen. Manny Diaz hugs Sen. Kelly Stargel after Stargel's bill SB 404, requiring parental consent for abortion for minors, passed the Senate 23-17 along party lines.**

a Republican from central Florida, who sponsored the bill. She recounted her own experience as a pregnant teenager in deciding against terminating her pregnancy.

"It's about whether or not

you're going to have an adult be involved with difficult decisions with children," she said.

Other Republicans expressed outrage that children must get parental permission to get a tattoo or their ears pierced but

don't currently need permission to get an abortion.

Abortion rights advocates say the proposal would further erode protections under Roe v. Wade, the 1973 landmark U.S. Supreme Court decision that

legalized abortion. Since then, abortion opponents have sought to restrict access, particularly on the state level where debate has intensified in recent years over funding abortion providers and defining when life begins.

"I don't believe the state of Florida should force children to have children," said Sen. Lauren Book, a South Florida Democrat, who spoke against the bill.

A similar effort passed the House last year, but the corresponding Senate bill failed to make it out of committees for full Senate debate — which made the Senate's approval on Thursday all the more significant.

Thursday's clash in the Florida Senate was the latest in a long history of discord over abortion in Florida and elsewhere.

If the parental consent bill is enacted into law, it will certainly be challenged in court.

"If I believe that we were putting something forward that would not withstand a court challenge, we would go back and rethink it. I'm confident that this legislation will move forward and be successfully upheld," Senate President Bill Galvano told reporters after the vote.