

## **Alabama: Raise the Age of Medical Consent to 18**

A parent knows and loves their child best and can ensure that their child receives the best medical care possible and follows through on treatments to ensure a child's full and speedy recovery.

- Children as young as 14 years old do not have the capacity to fully understand the risks and consequences of many medical decisions.
- They may decline critical medical care out of fear or uncertainty.
- Or they may consent to unnecessary care when pressured to do so by profit-driven medical clinics more focused on the bottom line than on patient health.
- A child's parents are the best safeguard against poor decision-making by a child and against the profit-driven medical establishment.

Children lack the maturity and self-control that comes with adulthood, but parents can provide critical guidance and oversight to their children receiving healthcare.

- A 14- or 15-year-old may forget to take important prescriptions or not follow through on guidelines given by his or her doctor to help the child more quickly recover.
- Parents provide important accountability to children, ensuring that their children fully comply with the treatment protocols.
- Because they know their child better than anyone else, parents will also be the first to notice if their child is having a negative reaction to the medication if the treatments are not curing the ailment, or if the child's recovery is going more slowly than expected.

Parents should be involved in counseling and mental health services for a child, especially if a child is experiencing depression, anxiety, or suicidal thoughts.

- Because parents know their child best, they will be the first to notice if a child is not responding to mental health treatments or is engaging in risky or harmful behavior.
- Parents must be involved in their child's mental health care so that they can monitor their child's progress and immediately notify a counselor or psychiatrist if their child has a relapse or mental health crisis.

The bill balances the general principle that parents are best equipped to direct their child's mental and physical healthcare with targeted, commonsense exceptions for when a teenager may consent to certain health procedures.

- If there is threat to a child's health, or the child is believed to be a victim of abuse or neglect, then no parental consent is necessary to provide mental or physical healthcare.
- Likewise, a child who has graduated school, gotten married, become pregnant, or is otherwise living independent from his or her parents, does not need parental consent for health care services.
- And if testing is needed to determine if a child is pregnant or has a drug or alcohol addiction or an STI, then no parental consent is needed.