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SANDERS SPEAKS OUT FOR RIGHT OF ACCESS TO ABORTION CLINICS

Rep. Bernard Sanders (I, VT) today spoke on the floor of the House of Representatives in support of women's right of access to abortion clinics, without threat of physical violence.

He supported H.R. 796, the Freedom of Access to Clinic Entrances Act of 1993, which prohibits the use or threat of force to obstruct access to a clinic providing abortions. The bill specifically states that its provisions do not limit peaceful picketing and demonstrations or any other act of expression protected by the First Amendment.

In his speech, Sanders said, "Under our Constitution and Bill of Rights, citizens in this country, regardless of their opinions, have the right to express their point of view, and to fight for what they believe in. But it is not just protesters who have constitutional rights. If a woman in this country chooses to have an abortion, she also has rights -- and those rights include the right to have that abortion without harassment, without violence, and without having to fight her way into a health clinic."

In recent years, acts of violence against health clinics providing abortions have escalated. Threats of physical violence, assaults, and even murders of clinic personnel have taken place in many states.

Sanders said, "Today we say to the fanatics who are threatening the lives of physicians and other health care providers, 'Enough is enough.' Today we say to the arsonists who are burning down health clinic, 'Enough is enough.' Today we say to those who are preventing other Americans from exercising their constitutional rights, 'Enough is enough.' Most importantly, today we say to the women of this country who have made the personal decision to have an abortion, 'That is your right, and your free choice, and the United States government stands behind you in defending your right to exercise that choice without fear of violence.'"

The bill is cosponsored by 128 members of the House. The vote on passage is expected later this afternoon.

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