Abortion access bill advances to Senate

By Matt McDonald  
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DOVER — As the country awaits a U.S. Supreme Court decision that is expected to overturn Roe v. Wade, lawmakers in a Delaware Senate committee forwarded a bill on Tuesday that would expand abortion access in the state and shield providers of reproductive health care from laws targeting them in other states.

House Bill 450 would allow physicians, certified nurse midwives and certified nurse practitioners to perform abortions.

The Senate Legislative Oversight and Sunset Committee voted to send the bill to the Senate floor Tuesday.

Sponsor Rep. Melissa Mimor-Brown, D-New Castle, said HB 450 is a “crucial bill — essentially looking at everything that’s going on in our country.”

“We have to make sure that we protect women’s right to reproductive health care. And we also need to make sure that we protect our clinicians from any legal repercussions related to providing reproductive health care to our women,” said Rep. Mimor-Brown, who holds nursing degrees.

HB 450’s movement through the Senate comes two months after Gov. John Carney signed into law a bill that expanded access to medical abortion in much the same way — by allowing more types of health care professionals to write such prescriptions.

Even if Roe v. Wade is overturned, abortion access in Delaware is already protected by statutes enacted in 1916 to prevent states from restricting access to abortion, to protect the health or life of the mother, and in cases of severe fetal anomalies. In 2017, lawmakers even further codified the principles of the 1973 Supreme Court decision.