

Olivia Data
Testimony on SB 2150
January 16, 2023

RE: Testimony in Opposition of SB 2150

Good afternoon, Chairwoman Larson and members of the committee.

My name is Olivia Data. I was born and raised here in North Dakota, I'm a North Dakota resident and a current freshman at Harvard college, and I am here today to urge you to vote "Do Not Pass" on SB 2150.

I know abortion is a difficult subject. It is an issue fraught with emotions and complex beliefs about life and death and right and wrong, which is why it is an issue that must be left up to individuals. Neither science nor religion can agree on when life begins – if it's at conception, the first heartbeat, the first breath – so why would we seek to draw such a harsh and uncompromising line as this one in the government?

I doubt there is a single person here who would disagree that the creation of new life is beautiful and that babies should be protected. Yet, we must also acknowledge that pregnancy is a health condition which can result in both positive and negative outcomes for the pregnant person and the fetus. The fact is, abortion is healthcare. Yes, it should be regulated, and of course, there should be other options, but denying anyone the right to choose what to do with their own body is not only extreme governmental overreach, but a violation of our most basic humanity.

No one wants an abortion like we want a spa day or an iced coffee. An abortion is a serious and, in many cases, necessary medical procedure. In an ideal world, no one would have to have an abortion, but until then, what will actually help reduce abortions is promoting better education,

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increasing access to medical resources, and empowering future generations to make healthy decisions about their own bodies.

I think we can agree that we all want to protect children. But I ask you not just to think about a romanticized narrative of saving the unborn, not just about the potentiality of hypothetical children, but about children today. I ask you to think about the children who, if the worst happens, and they are impregnated as a result of rape or incest, will have only 6 weeks to gather adequate support and resources to travel to a clinic in another state. I ask you to think about the children who, if this bill is passed, will have to grow up with the knowledge hanging over their heads that if they are hurt and violated, they could be treated as a criminal and not a survivor. I ask you to think about young girls who will be taught by this bill that the same government that's supposed to protect them does not trust them to make decisions about their own lives and bodies.

As a young woman, I am terrified. I have grown up knowing that I, as a woman, as a person, as a North Dakotan, have the right to control my own body. But if this bill passes, even in dire medical emergencies, even in cases of rape or incest, that right will be severely limited. Is my ability to feel safe in my own skin, is my liberty, is my life worth less to you than even the potentiality of a pregnancy?

SB 2150 tells me and every person who wants basic autonomy that our futures can be taken away at the whim of the government. It could be your children living in fear of losing their autonomy. Your grandchild could sit scared in a courtroom because somebody found their miscarriage suspicious. Your daughter could bleed out in a hospital while her doctor waits until

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she's close enough to death to be saved. How many of us will have to be hurt before you listen? How many of us will have to spill to you our deepest fears and most personal tragedies before you believe us? How many of us will have to stand up here and beg for fundamental human rights before you grant us the basic dignity to control our own bodies?

I truly believe we all want the same thing: to build a community where people feel safe and to provide a better, kinder future for North Dakota's children. But SB 2150 is not the way. Let us educate our youth, empower women to make our own decisions, and create a future where no one has to live in fear of losing their fundamental liberties.

I urge the committee to vote "Do Not Pass" on SB 2150.

Thank you for listening, and I will gladly stand for any questions.

Olivia Data
District 35
Bismarck, ND