

Representative Van Winkle and Sponsors of HB 1373,

My name is Ashley Rost and I am a doctoral social work student, licensed clinical social worker, and mother of two beautiful boys conceived via IVF. I am also a concerned citizen in the State of North Dakota. I am writing to let you know I OPPOSE your introduction of HB 1373 regarding “an Act to create and enact a new section to chapter 12.1-16, a new section to chapter 12.1-17, and two new sections to chapter 32-21 of the North Dakota Century Code, relating to the definition of human being and person as the terms relate to the offenses of murder and assault, and civil actions for death caused by wrongful acts.

This bill would make the process of IVF impossible for medical experts to perform. I have reviewed each of your biographies. Included on this bill we have a realtor, clergy, farm wife, etc. but I do not see biologists or even physicians who do this important work daily. Can you clarify, are you and your sponsors are proposing this bill due to your religious or personal beliefs? I do not see anything scientific included in your backgrounds that would indicate any of you have education or training on embryology.

A fertilized egg is NOT a human being. It is normal for eggs to fertilize but not result in pregnancy. It is also normal for fertilized eggs to not always grow into an embryo. With the wording of this bill, medical practices are only protected under “diagnostic procedures” which does not include IVF. As a social worker, I also do not have training in this field; however, I spent many years of my life working with specialized physicians who assisted my partner and I in having children via IVF. Without their support, we would have not had our two beautiful boys.

I see some of you and your sponsors are also introducing HB 1430 which attempts to depict conversion therapy as an ethical to offer by therapists. I do have expertise in that area and when the ND Board of Social Work Examiners updated their administrative rules in 2021, they included language that explicitly stated that practicing conversion therapy would be an ethical violation. Conversion therapy has many negative effects, and is known to increase suicide attempts and completions to individuals who have been subjected to it. It appears if these fertilized eggs you wish to protect develop into a member of the LBGTQIA population, you will NOT protect them but harm them by encouraging conversion therapy. This bill ignores the multiple mental health and medical associations who renounce conversion therapy as dangerous and ineffective.

I am asking you to reconsider these bills as a concerned citizen of North Dakota who has experience and knowledge using IVF AND knowledge that conversion therapy will increase the amount of suicide seen in the very fertilized eggs you wish to protect should they identify differently than you determine acceptable.

Sincerely,

Ashley Rost

Licensed Clinical Social Worker

Mother of two beautiful boys born via IVF