

Honorable Members of the Committee,

I am writing to express my strong opposition to HB1373, which proposes to grant personhood under a new definition of unborn child. The language of this bill poses significant risks to women's health and well-being, not only in North Dakota but potentially for individuals seeking reproductive health care nationwide.

Furthermore, this bill has dangerous implications for women's health. If a woman fears criminal charges after a miscarriage (or God forbid, needs life-saving measures from an ectopic pregnancy), it will discourage open and honest communication with health providers, who are critical to supporting women during these difficult times. This could result in women delaying necessary care or avoiding important medical advice, ultimately putting their health at risk. While the bill says it "does not apply to the unintentional death of an unborn child resulting from: spontaneous miscarriage", the overarching language in this bill undermines the medical knowledge that is needed in situations like this one. Doctors are the ones who need to be deciding medical treatment for women.

The bill also threatens to undermine fertility treatments like in vitro fertilization (IVF). IVF requires the creation and handling of embryos, and this bill could make many IVF procedures impossible or legally precarious, effectively shutting down the options for couples who seek to grow their families. The implications for individuals and families hoping to use IVF to achieve pregnancy are profound, and the negative effects on reproductive rights cannot be overstated.

This bill does not simply restrict choice—it imposes criminal consequences on personal, deeply emotional, and medically complex situations. It diminishes the autonomy of women in making health decisions, treating them as criminals for matters outside their control. This harms not only women's ability to make decisions about their own health but also undermines trust in the healthcare system.

I urge you to reconsider the passage of HB1373 and instead focus on legislation that respects and supports women's health, autonomy, and access to care. Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,
Brenda Ross
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