

Testimony on HB 1373

Chairman Ruby and Members of the House Humans Service Committee:

HB1373 is a seriously misguided effort by the sponsors to put their personal religious beliefs into state law. The bill is based on a very specific religious view of when human life begins, namely the position of the Roman Catholic Church and some Protestant Evangelical Churches. Virtually all mainline Protestant Churches--United Methodist, Lutheran, Presbyterian, United Church of Christ, Episcopal, in addition to most of Judaism reject such a misleading and unscientific definition of a child or a person. According to medical science when the human sperm and egg join together, they form a single cell called a zygote. A zygote is not a child or a person. Thankfully, in this country we are all free to hold our own religious beliefs, but this bill is an example of legislators who believe it is their job to impose their personal religious beliefs onto the rest of us via state law.

Separation of church and state aside, this legislation could very well complicate miscarriage management. The pain of losing a pregnancy is devastating enough without adding the fear that essential medical care might be delayed or denied because of restrictive laws. IVF is a crucial option for couples or families with fertility issues, this legislation threatens to take away that option. Personhood laws could restrict access to IVF by imposing legal complications. I only see this bill causing more suffering for parents-to-be with fertility issues. Patients and doctors should be free to make decisions based on health and compassion, not legal uncertainties. The bill has negative impacts to reproductive services, miscarriage management, and necessary medical care during dangerous pregnancies (like life-threatening ectopic pregnancies) or pregnancies of multiples. Not to mention unwanted pregnancies as the result of rape/sexual assault.

I firmly believe in a woman's right to do what she believes is best for herself and her family, though I am not asking you to oppose HB 1373 based solely on this right. I am also asking you to oppose this bill because North Dakota is facing an extreme shortage of medical providers. Medical professionals do not want to work in a state where they could face criminal charges for doing their jobs. No matter how many exceptions are included in this bill, there is always room for interpretation when faced with criminal charges.

It is your responsibility to protect the rights of citizens in North Dakota. I firmly insist you do so by recommending "Do Not Pass" on ND House Bill 1373.

Thank you