

February 4, 2025

Dear Committee Members,

My name is Casie Davis, and I am writing to express my strong OPPOSITION for HB 1373.

Time and time again we have seen that bills which try to define life beginning at fertilization have devastating consequences for women and their families. Bills like HB 1373 are often too ambiguous to allow for safe and accessible medical care for women and put medical procedures, such as IVF, at risk.

Many people don't realize, or perhaps care, that when states try to define life as beginning at fertilization, it effectively bans access to IVF in that state. It becomes too difficult for clinics offering IVF to work around these types of bills, as their work with embryos effectively becomes illegal. So, while these bills claim to be champions of life and babies, families who actually want children will be told that it is no longer possible for them. I have a two-year-old daughter and two embryos. As thankful as I am that I have those embryos, they do not hold the same value as my daughter. She is a human being, they are a clump of cells with the *potential* to become human beings.

My opposition to HB 1373 is only increased when it states that it does not apply with "A procedure undertaken to save the life of the mother when accompanied by reasonable steps to save the life of the unborn child." That sounds like a nice exception in order to protect a woman's health, yet who decides what the "reasonable steps" are? Her doctor? The hospital administration? The police? The court system? The government? And how much must a woman suffer before it's considered "reasonable?" How close to death? This is the exact ambiguity that has killed women in other states and that has left *live* children without their mothers. The same ambiguity that has left women infertile or dealing with health consequences for the rest of their lives. In the end, these bills lead to needless and cruel suffering in the name of "protecting life." But on that mission, the life of women is forgotten; the health and life of women is not protected.

Furthermore, HB 1373 states that it also does not apply to "spontaneous miscarriage." But, again, the ambiguity here becomes extremely dangerous. What does a "spontaneous miscarriage" entail to the bill sponsors? Who gets to decide if it was truly "spontaneous?" This is an issue that we, again, see come up in other states that pass personhood laws. Women find themselves under investigation, or worse, after the already devastating event of losing a pregnancy.

Finally, I would like to point out that there are no financial benefits for North Dakota if this bill passes. It has become widely discussed in this country that the fertility rates are going down, yet these types of bills often lead couples to decide to not have children at all. Parents are already balancing the high costs of childcare, healthcare, housing, etc. Add a bill like this into the mix and then the risks quickly outweigh the benefits of having children. We will see the negative effects of that ripple across the state. Even worse, it will likely lead people to leave the state altogether. Less populated states like North Dakota should be trying to pass bills that are appealing and beneficial to constituents in order to entice people to move to our state; instead,

we may find people wanting to run away from it. And let me be clear, personhood bills will always lead to more financial burden on the state.

At the end of the day, the role of our government should be to improve the lives of its citizens. However, HB 1373 ultimately has no benefits for anyone. It puts the life of a fetus above that of women (which we've seen has devastating consequences), it places the government in the bedroom and medical room of its citizens, and it financially harms the state. There are plenty of horrendous consequences and zero benefits if this bill were to pass.

I am asking that you vote NO on HB 1373.

Thank you for your consideration,

Casie Davis  
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Bismarck