

Hello Members of the House and Human Services Committee and thank you for hearing my testimony today.

My name is Skyler Ballard, and I was born and raised in the great state of North Dakota. Since August 2024, I have been away from home pursuing a law degree in Boston, Massachusetts. As I grow accustomed to the state, I learn more and more each day of the amazing possibilities that await our beautiful North Dakota.

Before you today is a Bill that intends to change the meaning of an “unborn child.” While I’m sure that we can all agree a human life is worth fighting for, I ask you to consider not only the life of the unborn child, but the lives that already sit before you today.

While reading the other testimony that is before you, I came to the conclusion that we have forgotten that more than one life is at stake when we talk about the issue of abortion. In these debates of “pro-life” and “pro-choice” I often hear the argument that the unborn child could cure cancer or be the next President of the United States. Although this could undoubtedly be true, I ask you to consider that the person carrying the child *could be these things too*, given the chance to make their own decisions about their own bodies.

Opponents of my stance will say that women should be more careful if they do not want to become pregnant. I think that is an argument for a different day. Today we must focus on ensuring that we do not take away the lives of the people who are already born.

I have read testimony that points to the 14th Amendment, with those making claims that the Amendment provides equal protection under the law to these zygotes. I ask that you consider *my* equal protection under the 14th Amendment, and *my* ability to make informed choices about my own body, with the help of a healthcare provider.

Members of the House and Human Services Committee, I have been yearning for the day I can come home to North Dakota and share the wealth of knowledge I have gained. However, I fear that passing the Bill before you today will have severe repercussions for women of all ages and will drive us away from the wonderful state we call home.

When you are considering this Bill, I urge you to think of the women whose lives will be affected forever by its passing, and I urge you to vote **Do Not Pass** on **HB 1373**.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Respectfully,

Skyler Ballard