

February 2, 2025

Testimonial in Opposition to North Dakota House Bill 1373

To the Honorable Members of the North Dakota State Legislature,

I am writing to strongly oppose **House Bill 1373**, which seeks to redefine the terms “human being” and “person” in relation to the offenses of murder, assault, and civil actions for death caused by wrongful acts. I believe this bill poses significant risks to individual rights, particularly for women, families, and those who have sought or may seek reproductive healthcare in North Dakota.

As a person who has gone through the process of in vitro fertilization (IVF), I am deeply concerned about how this bill could affect the rights of individuals undergoing fertility treatments. In the IVF process, multiple embryos are often created in the hope of successful implantation and pregnancy. Not all embryos are viable, and some are discarded if they do not develop properly or if they are not needed in the course of treatment. If HB 1373 were to pass, it could open the door for legal complications regarding these medical decisions, as the redefined term “human being” might classify embryos as persons with legal rights.

My family’s IVF journey was a deeply personal and sometimes heartbreaking process. We worked closely with medical professionals, navigating the emotional and physical challenges of fertility treatments. We knew the importance of careful decisions when it came to embryos. These were medical decisions based on the health of my body, the wellbeing of my family, and our hopes for the future. The passage of HB 1373 could force us, and others in similar situations, into a legal minefield, where our personal medical decisions could be questioned or even criminalized based on a redefinition of what constitutes a “person.”

Furthermore, this bill has the potential to create unnecessary legal complexities in cases of wrongful death, assault, and murder. It risks conflating the legal status of a fertilized egg or embryo with that of a fully developed human being, which could lead to inconsistent and confusing legal outcomes. The bill does not account for the real-world implications it would have on individuals and families navigating delicate medical decisions, particularly those related to reproductive health. It could undermine the trust between doctors and patients, making it more difficult for medical professionals to provide care without the constant fear of legal repercussions.

Rather than moving forward with legislation that creates division, confusion, and uncertainty, I urge you to reconsider HB 1373. This bill does not protect women’s rights, nor does it improve public safety or health. It adds unnecessary restrictions on personal medical decisions and could harm those who are already vulnerable, particularly families undergoing fertility treatments or those facing pregnancy-related health issues.

I believe that North Dakota should be a place where families, individuals, and medical professionals are supported in making the best decisions for their health and their future. HB

1373 does the opposite by infringing on personal rights and creating barriers that would harm those trying to start a family, as I did, through IVF or other reproductive technologies.

I respectfully urge you to vote against this bill, for the sake of personal autonomy, medical care, and the well-being of North Dakotans.

Thank you for your time and thoughtful consideration.

Sincerely,
Jenna Sobolik
Park River, North Dakota