

Testimony Opposing HB 1373

North Dakota Legislative Assembly
House Human Services Public Hearing
February 5, 2025

Dear Members of the Committee,

My name is Emma Weisner and I am a medical student at the University of North Dakota. I am writing in strong opposition to House Bill 1373. As a future physician, I am deeply concerned about the implications of this bill, which seeks to redefine "human being" and "person" in ways that could have far-reaching consequences for medical care, patient autonomy, and reproductive rights in North Dakota.

HB 1373 defines an "unborn child" as beginning at the moment of fertilization and grants it the same legal protections as a person. This sweeping change poses significant risks to pregnant patients and the physicians who care for them. The bill lacks critical exceptions for complex medical conditions, including nonviable pregnancies and life-threatening maternal complications. By failing to account for the medical nuances of pregnancy, this legislation endangers patients and could create legal barriers to necessary, evidence-based care.

As a medical student in a state where abortion is already banned, I am acutely aware of the chilling effect laws like HB 1373 have on medical education and physician retention. Bills that criminalize or further restrict reproductive healthcare discourage physicians from training and practicing in North Dakota, exacerbating our existing provider shortage. This harms all patients, especially those in rural and underserved areas.

Moreover, HB 1373 could have unintended legal consequences. By granting personhood at fertilization, the bill raises questions about access to fertility treatments like in vitro fertilization and could result in criminalization of standard medical practices, such as miscarriage management. It also opens the door for legal conflicts that could interfere with routine obstetric care, putting physicians in the impossible position of choosing between providing appropriate medical treatment and avoiding legal liability.

I urge you to oppose HB 1373 and instead support policies that protect patient autonomy and uphold the integrity of medical decision-making. Physicians and patients—not lawmakers—should be the ones making critical healthcare decisions. Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

Emma Weisner