

Chairman Ruby and honorable members of the House Human Services committee:

My name is Ruth Jorritsma, and I am testifying before you today as a citizen of North Dakota. I am coming before you to request that you give HB1373 a “Do Not Pass” recommendation.

Here is my story. Years ago, when our children were very little, I joined a Mothers of Preschoolers (MOPS) group. I became part of the leadership and therefore participated in the process of selecting speakers for our meetings. For one of our meetings, we decided to invite a pro-life clinic to come and speak to the women. It was our thinking that perhaps some of the women may have had an abortion in the past and may now be struggling to process that in light of their new roles as mothers.

During the discussion, two of our leaders brought to light that they had had abortions in the past. The leadership team was between 10-12 people, so that was 15-20% of our total team. I had become good friends with one of the women, and she shared her story with me. When the day came for the presentation, she was quite anxious. At the end of the talk the two ladies from the clinic stated that they would be at the tables in the back of the room in case anyone wanted to talk to them.

The group moved on to the craft portion of the meeting. No one was going back to talk to the presenters. My friend leaned over to me and said that she wanted to go to talk to them but didn't want people to know she had an abortion. She seemed desperate to find a way out of the grief and guilt that hung over her. Finally, I suggested that we both go. That way people may think that, as leaders, we were just going to thank them for coming. She agreed to that, and we went up to them. I made chit chat while my friend found a way forward toward healing and freedom.

Let me state at this point, I do believe that life is a gift from God, and I would love to see an end to the horrible practice of abortion. I pray for a change of heart in America, so that our most vulnerable members will be protected and cherished. I also recognize, though, that abortion has gone on in this country for decades. The loss has been catastrophic and the babies as well as their future generations are gone forever.

My thoughts turn back to the mother. People like my friend find themselves desperate for freedom and forgiveness. This is not an easy thing to find for post-abortive women. If this law were to pass, what would happen to our pro-life clinics? What would happen to our post-abortive women who need help? I could see the law bringing an end to many of the services offered by the clinics. Who would go to a clinic and say that they are thinking about an abortion. They could face significant punishment if they decided to have that abortion. So, they would stuff it down deep and not address it. What if they later changed

their minds and realized that what they did was very wrong? Where could they go for help? To admit the mistake is again to face possible significant punishment. They would just try to stuff it down deeper. The thing about keeping secrets like that, is that they will deeply impact every aspect of life.

Because abortion has been such a big influence in our culture, there are many women, like my friend, that need help. Where will they find it?

Thank you for your time and I am happy to answer any questions.

-Ruth Jorritsma