

Grace Becker  
Fargo, ND  
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North Dakota House Human Services Committee  
North Dakota Legislative Assembly  
600 E Boulevard Ave, Bismarck, ND 58505

**RE: Opposition to House Bill 1373**

Dear Chair Ruby and Members of the House Human Services Committee,

I am writing to express my strong **opposition to House Bill 1373** and urge the committee to **vote against this legislation**. As a citizen of North Dakota and as a Mental Health Therapist licensed in the state of North Dakota, I am deeply troubled by the potential consequences of this bill and the harm it could inflict on North Dakotans.

North Dakota House Bill 1373 seeks to redefine the terms "human being" and "person" within the state's criminal code to include an "unborn child," defined as "an individual living human child before birth from the beginning of biological development at the moment of fertilization upon the fusion of a human spermatozoon with a human ovum." This redefinition would extend to offenses such as murder and assault, as well as civil actions for death caused by wrongful acts.

House Bill 1373 is deeply concerning as it raises significant **legal, ethical, constitutional, economic, social, and public health concerns**. Below is a breakdown of the **negative impacts** this bill could have:

1. Impact on Individuals & Communities

- **Criminalization of Reproductive Healthcare** – The bill could criminalize certain reproductive healthcare practices, potentially leading to legal action against individuals who seek or provide abortion care, contraception, or fertility treatments.
- **Chilling Effect on Medical Providers** – Physicians and fertility specialists may be unwilling to provide certain medical services (such as in vitro fertilization, emergency contraception, or even life-saving procedures for pregnant patients) due to fear of legal liability.
- **Increased Surveillance & Government Overreach** – Women who experience miscarriages or stillbirths could face legal scrutiny to determine if their pregnancy loss resulted from a “wrongful act,” subjecting them to invasive government investigations.

## 2. Legal, Ethical, and Constitutional Concerns

- **Violation of Privacy & Bodily Autonomy** – By legally defining life at fertilization, the bill interferes with personal medical decisions and could violate constitutional rights to privacy and bodily autonomy under federal law.
- **Potential Criminalization of Contraception** – Certain forms of contraception, such as IUDs and emergency contraception (Plan B), could be restricted or banned under this definition, as they may prevent implantation after fertilization.
- **Interference with Assisted Reproductive Technology (ART)** – In vitro fertilization (IVF) often involves the creation of multiple embryos, some of which are not implanted. If these embryos are considered legal persons, clinics may face legal consequences for discarding or freezing embryos, limiting access to fertility treatments.
- **Conflict with Federal Law** – This bill could violate federal protections for reproductive healthcare, leading to costly legal battles for the state.

## 3. Economic Consequences

- **Increased Healthcare Costs & Liability Risks** – Doctors and hospitals may face higher insurance premiums and legal costs due to the risk of prosecution related to reproductive care.
- **Loss of Medical Professionals** – North Dakota may see a decline in OB-GYNs, fertility specialists, and general practitioners, as many may choose to leave the state rather than risk prosecution for providing evidence-based medical care.
- **Deterrent for Business & Workforce Retention** – Companies may struggle to attract and retain workers, particularly women, and families, if reproductive healthcare options are restricted. Some businesses may even reconsider investing in North Dakota due to concerns about employee rights and healthcare access.

## 4. Social & Public Health Consequences

- **Worsening Maternal & Infant Health Outcomes** – Restricting reproductive healthcare services can lead to higher rates of maternal mortality, unsafe pregnancies, and increased complications for women with high-risk conditions.
- **Disproportionate Impact on Marginalized Communities** – Low-income individuals, rural residents, and people of color—who already face barriers to healthcare—would be disproportionately affected by reduced access to contraception, prenatal care, and fertility treatments.

- **Potential for Increased Criminalization of Pregnancy** – Women who engage in activities that could harm a fertilized egg (such as taking certain medications, smoking, or experiencing pregnancy complications) could be subject to legal action, leading to unjust prosecutions.

In North Dakota, we pride ourselves on fairness, personal freedoms, and ensuring the well-being of all residents, House Bill 1373 contradicts these values. Rather than solving problems, this bill creates unnecessary burdens and potential harm for North Dakotans.

**I urge you to reject House Bill 1373** and instead focus on policies that support the rights and well-being of North Dakotans. Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

Grace Becker  
Mental Health Therapist and North Dakota Resident