

Chairman Ruby and members of the committee,

My name is Rob Grunden. I'm a Pastor at Hillside Baptist Church in Dickinson. I am in favor of HB1373 and heartily recommend a due pass.

I want to begin with my thanks to you for your willingness to read or listen and to take seriously the people of North Dakota in this matter. There has never been a bill more consequential than HB1373 in the history of this state, a fact upon which I am sure both sides of the matter would agree.

As stated above, I am a Pastor. Among many other things I have the task of standing behind a pulpit nearly each week and proclaiming the truth of God's word to all present, a responsibility that I take very seriously. God says in His word that there shouldn't be many who become teachers "knowing that as such we will incur a stricter judgment" (James 3:1) and I feel the weight of that each week. I stand behind the pulpit each week knowing that before my wife and children, before the elders or congregants in our church, and before the local, state, or national government, I will firstly be accountable to God Himself for the decisions I make when heralding His word. So, I sympathize with your position as fellow servants of the same Almighty God. In Romans 13:4 God refers to the governing authorities as a "minister of God to [citizens] for good." I acknowledge the tremendous weight of this decision that is before you in HB1373.

With that being said, I hope you will indulge me and hear my story. I served in the United States Marine Corps from 2006 to 2010. I was married in 2007 and within a year my wife and I learned that the Lord had blessed us with a child that was to arrive in March of 2009. It wasn't long until, at a regularly scheduled check-up in the Naval Hospital we learned that there were some anomalies showing up in the ultrasound. The medical staff did what medical staff do and scheduled us to see a specialist to determine what was going on with our baby. We arrived at that appointment, went through the ultrasound, after which the doctor informed us that our child had trisomy 13. He told us that our boy (as we

found out) would likely not survive to term, that if he does, he would almost certainly not survive beyond the first few months.

Needless to say, we were both devastated. After essentially telling us that our son wouldn't live anyway, he told us that it would be an easy procedure and that we could just choose to end the pregnancy. Though he wouldn't tell us which choice to make, based on his wording, terminating the pregnancy seemed like the obvious choice to make because this would all end in disaster for our boy anyway. He gave us the news and the implied recommendation and then wasn't leaving the room and seemed to want an answer from us. I asked he and the staff to leave the room so my wife and I could have a minute. When they left my wife broke down and we both wept in despair.

Donna and I were Christians then, and though we were fairly naïve, we knew that both biblically and scientifically human life is precious, dignified, valuable, and as God's very image (Genesis 1:26-27), worthy of life. It was also clear to us that it is God's right alone to "put to death and give life" (Deuteronomy 32:39). So, we chose to move forward with the pregnancy and work through whatever the Lord would see fit to do. The medical staff entered the room again and we gave the doctor our decision. Immediately after we made our intentions clear he commenced to tell us that there are also lots of times that this anomaly goes away and that it's no guarantee that it's trisomy 13. Upon this revelation I instantly went from despair to feelings of anger. Why didn't he say that? Why did he wait until after we made our decision to give us *all* the relevant information? Would he have even told us that if we'd chosen death?

It wasn't until a while after that incident that I put it all together and realized that so-called medical professional was attempting to sell me an abortion the way any salesman sells any *product*.

I do not write this testimony, claiming to have all the statistics. I'm not submitting this as a genius or a person with all the answers for you. I don't know all the studies that have been done or the laws on the books. There are better people for that discussion who are also submitting testimonies on behalf of the bill. I *do* know there are several of you who are husbands, wives, fathers, and mothers. I know several of you are

armed services veterans or engage in other professions which focus on helping people and loving your neighbor.

Only a few years ago the whole nation was all but chanting, “Love your neighbor” in the name of justice. For the better part of the last decade, we’ve heard countless cries over ethnic and class disparities, in the name of justice. Many have metaphorically and physically fought over rights for various groups, all in the name of justice.

Justice is certainly important; incredibly important. It’s biblical. In fact, our creator demands and expects justice. “Righteousness and justice are the foundation of [God’s] throne” (Psalm 89:14). God says, “for I, the Lord, love justice; I hate robbery and wrongdoing” (Isaiah 61:8). And it was in Micah 6:8 that we learn that God “requires” of us that we “do justice”.

So, I’m all for this cry for justice. However, biblical justice requires justice for all. So why? Why would we continue to rob, literally the most innocent among us, of justice. Why wouldn’t we afford the same right to live, to humans of any age and in any stage? Since human life begins at conception (and there’s no valid argument otherwise), there is no other logical option under God but to afford the right to life to all human beings; to all who bear the image of God.

This bill does one thing. It clarifies a biblically and scientifically indisputable fact. That is all. This bill would be one step closer to true justice for *all* humans. This bill would be one step closer to affording rights to the only group in our nation who seem to have none. This bill would be one step closer to no more couples being coerced and pressured to kill their child simply because another fallible human believes it’s the right move.

Our son’s name is Dallas. He’s a great kid. He’s the healthiest person in our family of four. He’s excelling in school, is enjoying the second year of his first job and, Lord willing, will have his license next month. And if the abortionist had his way, Dallas would be dead right now, and he would’ve been one dead baby richer.

**I respectfully urge the passage of HB1373, as a bill that aligns with justice for *all*, as the Author of Life demands.**