

Good morning- thank you for the opportunity to speak to you again as you consider House Bill 1373. I am here today in firm opposition.

This bill directly and negatively impacts the ability to access necessary IVF services to countless North Dakotans aiming to grow or start their families. It is intentional in its vagueness and provides no protection for those aiming to create the very thing it claims to want to protect: LIFE. Instead, 1373 would leave room for these individuals to be labeled criminals.

Last week, I shared a bit of my story with this committee when I came here in support of HB1477. Considering the bill before you, I think it bears repeating. “Seven and a half years ago, I walked into the Sanford Reproductive Clinic and asked for help. Like many, I had a deep and persistent desire to be a mother. What I did not know was that it would take another 4 years, 17 assisted attempts, and profound loss, from the moment I asked for help, for my first child to be born. It would not have been possible without the knowledge and resources of my medical team. Two years later, I was fortunate enough again to experience unbridled, overwhelming joy and gratitude as we welcomed our second son into the world. It is a miracle that he is here today; that miracle was IVF, and the subsequent care it provided.”

Today I would like to share a little more of our story with you.

When we set out to give our first son a sibling- IVF terrified me. The medications, the time, the cost, and still no guarantee of a baby. Ultimately, it was the path forward for our family. We spent months preparing, and tens of thousands of dollars. We were lucky though- we were able to retrieve mature eggs, then have healthy embryos, and finally on our third transfer, I became pregnant. It was not an easy pregnancy, and the journey after was anything but straight forward. Finley was born in February 2023 and has needed three separate surgeries- the first of which when he was only a day old. He has fought for his life at every obstacle, and today you would see a happy, silly, healthy 2-year-old --not the adversity he has faced. Now its our turn to fight for his right to be here.

The bill before you is vague by design. It is riddled with collateral damage that would create lawbreakers out of those that long to be a mother, a father. It is an insult to those who have poured every ounce of themselves into the mere hope of having a child. I do not know if the sponsors of HB1373 have hidden malicious intent or if it is a willful ignorance of the consequence of their actions, but neither have a place in the laws of North Dakota.

One week ago, members of this committee met in this same room and asked Representative Hanson if there was any legislation that would bar the practice of IVF- here is the legislation we have feared. North Dakota now has an opportunity to learn from other states, and the side effects of poorly written fetal personhood legislation. The ramifications are far, wide, and by the words of this bill, undefined. Our state risks losing health care providers, further damaging its already declining birth rate, and jeopardizing women's health.

I implore this committee not to rush- the least we are owed by our legislators is that they slow down long enough to listen. Please listen to the medical experts and providers in our state. Please listen to the stories of those of us whose children and families would not be here if this bill was already law. Please listen to the stories of those of us whose children and families would not be here if this bill was already law. We will continue to share them with you in the hope that it is enough to help the future families of North Dakota. Please listen when we say that "There is no one that cares more for an embryo than an IVF patient. However, no one understands more than an IVF patient, that an embryo is not a child." For if it were, I would have four children today instead of two. Please see my sons' lives and protect the lives of my future children. Please join us in opposition of the bill before you today.

Thank you again for your time and willingness to hear me today. I am more than happy to answer any questions the committee may have.

