

Birgit Pruess, Ph.D. Biology
3696 Harrison St. S
Fargo, ND

January 26, 2025

RE: HB1477

Dear members of the 69th Legislative Assembly of North Dakota,

I am a resident of Fargo, ND. Please, accept the below as my testimony IN FAVOR of HB1477, relating to 'fertility health care treatment rights'. I testify as a private citizen not as a representative of a group.

I would like to offer some insights into how access to assisted reproduction can help or even build families. In fact, 42% of families either have used fertility treatment themselves or know someone who has. I fall into the second of these categories. Of course, not everybody who does *in vitro* fertilization will give birth to a healthy baby. The percentage of americans that were born as a result of fertility treatment is much lower at 2.4%. That is still six to seven millions of people. Keep in mind that one cycle in a healthy woman really only delivers results at a 15% chance of success. Except repeated attempts are much cheaper and quite a bit more enjoyable for most than fertility treatments, which can easily end up with 10 or 20 k per attempt. And be quite stressful to the body of the woman from a health perspective. Women would never request fertility treatment, if frequent attempts to get pregnant the natural way had not failed. Do we really want to deprive couples this chance of building families? Do we want our society to live with six or seven millions of people fewer in our already depleted workforce? We are complaining about our low birth rate. Well, this is one way to get it up.

Personally, the female members of my family have been plagued with endometriosis, which is a major source of infertility in women. I was member of the Endometriosis Association for several years and have heard many talks by high reputation fertility Doctors, as well as some 30 women who really suffered because of their inability to conceive. The stories were most often heart breaking and we always had a box of Kleenex on the table. *In vitro* fertilization gives these women and their partners hope, sometimes joy, other times despair. Either way, it is one other chance of starting the much desired family. And what about the baby that would not have been born without treatment? Would you have wanted to be that baby that never was conceived because a fertility treatment was not available to your parents? Obviously, you can't answer that question because you would not be here. Neither would be several millions other citizens that would have never been conceived, much less born.

It is unfortunate that the desire to have a baby and the ability to have a baby so often don't align. But this is not anybody's personal failure, just the way biology works. I think our families and our society deserve this opportunity to allow birth of a baby in a health situation that they could not control.

Altogether, I support HB1477 and recommend a PASS vote.

As in all my testimonies, I much appreciate the hard work and dedication that each member of my state legislative assembly puts into our state. Thank you.

Sincerely and respectfully
Birgit Pruess, Ph.D. Biology