

House Human Services Committee

HB 1477

Wednesday January 29, 2025

Chair Ruby and Committee Members, I am Dr Collette Lessard, a board-certified physician in Obstetrics and Gynecology practicing in Grand Forks, North Dakota. I have been practicing as an OBGYN physician for nearly 12 years. I am also writing as the Legislative Chair for the North Dakota section of the American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists.

I am writing in support of HB 1477. Infertility evaluation and treatment is a substantial part of my practice as a general OBGYN physician. Approximately 1 in 6 couples are affected by infertility. There are many different causes of infertility, therefore, the treatment options for couples can vary. Infertility treatment can range from ovulation medications to artificial insemination and in vitro fertilization. Sometimes donor sperm and donor eggs are the best option for a couple. There are also cases where fertility preservation is necessary for patients.

The infertility journey is deeply personal and emotional for couples. In the past couple decades, medicine has made immense progress in helping these families conceive. I have been able to care for hundreds of patients in their pregnancies as a direct result of in vitro fertilization. Having a family is a lifelong dream for many women. For some couples, IVF is the only way they can conceive and experience the joy of carrying a pregnancy and growing their family. The state we live in should not impact the options available for families struggling with infertility. The need for protection of infertility treatment options is crucial. The proposed personhood legislation (HB 1373) is a clear example of why we need protection in our state for ensuring access to full spectrum infertility treatment options. A personhood bill would take away the option of IVF for these patients.

Infertility affects more families than most realize. These couples deserve to have all the options available to help grow their families when they are struggling to conceive on their own. Like with HB 1478, I was able to help with expert medical guidance when this bill was drafted. I urge you to give a “do pass” and support HB 1477 so that every couple has continued access to all infertility treatment options in North Dakota.

Respectfully,

Collette Lessard, MD, FACOG