

I cannot make it to Montpelier to testify tomorrow, but thank you for sharing these thoughts with the public.

Dear Legislators,

I hope you will stand up for Vermonters by defending both women's rights and the rights of the unborn. Please don't make the mistake of believing that voting against House Bill 57 would be hurting the cause of women in our state. I am a feminist. I participated in the women's march last year, hoping to teach our then foster daughter that she is no less valuable than any man. I run a business in Brattleboro that employees mostly women. I am a feminist AND I believe fetuses should have rights. It does not have to be one or the other. Why should the youngest and most vulnerable of our population have absolutely no rights? In practical terms, I'm asking you to vote against House Bill 57 in order to protect the unborn, but also to make a commitment to laws that will serve Vermont women--more affordable health care, better childcare options, equal wages, more resources for DCF.

From a scientific perspective, does it make sense that a full term fetus would have no rights but a baby born a few minutes later would have the same rights as the mother? No, killing a full-term baby is really no different than killing a recently born baby.

I understand that the situations in which a full-term pregnancy might be terminated are usually heart-wrenching, complex situations. But we do not kill disabled babies just because they may experience suffering--even extreme suffering. Why should we kill a disabled fetus? Even if doctors are convinced a fetus will die during or soon after birth, doctors are often wrong. And again, we wouldn't kill a baby just because we think the baby is going to die soon. No, we would do everything possible to save that baby's life. And if carrying a baby through delivery is going to put the mother's life at risk, an early C-section can typically be done.

Thank you for giving this careful consideration and for serving our great state.

Abigail Gehring Lawrence