

Jennifer Carpenter
South Burlington, VT

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RE: Support for H.57 - Preserving the right to have an abortion in Vermont

To the Members of the House Committee on Human Services:

Thank you in advance for your time in reading this letter. I am writing to express my strong support of the H.57 bill to preserve the right to have an abortion in the State of Vermont. Although I see it has a great deal of support from legislators (per the large list of sponsors), and see that this is not a change from what we've been doing in Vermont, I have also seen the opposition wave. I ask anyone in opposition to the bill to consider this: What if the State of Vermont mandated that all persons who are capable of procreation be on birth control after your first child? Would you not feel that your personal lives were imposed upon? Despite the strength of my pro-choice position, I would not consider supporting a bill that made a reproductive choice for you, because I don't think it's my choice to make for anyone. And it sets a dangerous precedent to put those decisions in the hands of the State, particularly in light of our current Federal government that sets a tone of intolerance towards women, looking at the Kavanaugh nomination. I do not at all feel that abortion should be a form of birth control. However, the decision is between a woman and her doctor, and it's my understanding that late term abortion is very rarely ever done anyway by doctors except in cases that are life-threatening to the mother.

Removing choices from a woman reduces her status in society first and foremost because it places institutional judgement and therefore a restriction upon her that does not occur with men, so it could be argued that it's a form of discrimination. The State has not proposed institutionally removing reproductive choices for men, when two people are responsible. However, I do not advocate for the state to take reproductive choices away from men either by any means, as it's their personal business. And I believe that removing choices from women disempowers both men and women. For the woman, it reduces our employment pursuits, therefore income earning potential, increases our expenses, making us more susceptible to poverty; it can also endanger a woman's health if health history is not taken into consideration, and also interferes in our privacy on a stricter level with the state than what men are subjected to. In sum, it negatively impacts a woman's ability to fully participate in public life. For men, it places unnecessary pressure on them to financially support a child if a woman is required to have one upon State discovery of conception, and pressures him into a traditional role that he may not be ready to take on for whatever reasons, be they economic, religious, social, or cultural. He shouldn't have to be indirectly pressured when the State did not take into account either his or the woman's individual circumstances, of which should remain out of the State's scope of investigation.

There's many reasons for a separation between Church and State and this is one of them. In America we are a melting pot of faiths and cultural values and voting in favor of H.57 would honor that. Although there are several religions that do not believe in abortion, it appears that the most vocal constituency in the State of Vermont context on the issue are those who identify with Christian values. I'm concerned that Vermont law could become increasingly Christian-biased, and not everyone in the State of Vermont believes in Christianity and in the same beliefs as other Christians. Respectfully, I advocate that we can still hold space for our beliefs while we extend an openness to value systems that may or may not fit into one's own spirituality.

Also, let's acknowledge the often-discussed child homelessness and poverty surrounding the issue. According to Vermont Digger on June 1st, 2018, the 2018 Point-in-Time (PIT) Count Report shows that children make up 23% of the homeless population in Vermont. Let's address this and consider how we can create economic conditions that make it more of a supportive environment to raise families in Vermont, instead of forcing people into having children that neither they, nor the State may be able to financially support.

Instead of stigmatizing women for unplanned pregnancies and what we do with them, let's all refocus on elevating the quality of life for women, men and children on many levels, by providing Vermonters with affordable housing, affordable health care, a \$15/hr minimum wage, affordable child care, pay equity, and educational equity for all. When all people have more economically sustainable lives, they can have more choices, and having more choices means that they are in a stronger position to grow families, should they choose to do so, and grow stronger communities.

Thank you very much again for your time and consideration to my support for bill H.57.

Sincerely,

Jennifer Carpenter
Resident of South Burlington