

Committee on Human Services,

I am writing as a concerned citizen of Georgia and mother of 5 children. Please defend our little ones and vote no on H.57 as written. Thank you very much for taking the time to read my concerns below.

Our youngest son has a global developmental disability. As we've managed his care over the past 7 years, the concept of abortion has become even more tragic to me. The most vulnerable and defenseless ones in our midst need our *greatest protection*. As a society, we understand that in all other levels, except for the issue of abortion.

“And gradually, though no one remembers exactly how it happens, the unthinkable becomes tolerable. And then acceptable. And then legal. And then applaudable.” – Joni Eareckson Tada, paraplegic

Section A of the proposed bill H.57 does not give cause for concern. *(a) Every individual has the fundamental right to choose or refuse contraception or sterilization.* Contraception and sterilization are decisions that affect only the person making the choice to seek to prevent conception. In this arena, it is truly "my body, my choice."

However, section B is very concerning. *(b) Every individual who becomes pregnant has the fundamental right to choose to carry a pregnancy to term, give birth to a child, or to have an abortion.* A pregnancy is not a medical condition. It involves a second human being who has been conceived through sexual intercourse. We cannot murder our born children and we must not murder our unborn. I may not wish to become pregnant, but once I am, that baby has as much of a right to live as I do.

Section C is even more concerning. *(c) A fertilized egg, embryo, or fetus shall not have independent rights under Vermont law.* A fetus is a human baby. We protect endangered bird eggs because we know they contain a baby bird. We perform complex surgeries on babies in the womb because we know they are human children. Doctors provide anesthesia for these fetuses because we know they feel pain! We must not inject, tear apart, or suction these babies out of their mothers' wombs. They need our utmost protection.

This week has been one of holocaust remembrance. How can we "speak up and speak out" for those who were killed by Nazis but not speak up and speak out for those who are killed in our own state and country? In both cases, the value of the human life was in question. We are creating our own holocaust.

In closing, I recognize the issues related to healthcare for women and care for unwanted children. We support *Aspire Together*, which is a local pregnancy center. They provide support of all kinds for parents who wish to carry babies to term. *Bethany Christian Services* is an adoption agency that can place children into other homes when parents are not able to care for their babies. There are alternatives to abortion, and we must embrace the complexity of a human who grows inside another human. Both the mother and the baby deserve our respect, protection and care.

Thank you for reading my remarks. I will be in Montpelier today during the public hearing to represent the concerns listed above. Thank you for the work you do.

I urge you to "Speak up for those who cannot speak for themselves, for the rights of all who are destitute. Speak up and judge fairly; defend the rights of the poor and needy." Proverbs 31:8-9

Respectfully,
Mary-Margaret Larson