

I am speaking as a private citizen, voter, and resident of Elmore, requesting that you reject H.57.

I came into adulthood shortly before the Roe v. Wade decision. I never personally had an abortion, but I had a close friend who did. She was single, and in a steady relationship, when she became pregnant. She loved children and didn't want to end the pregnancy, but she saw no other way out. Not only her boyfriend, but her doctor were putting pressure on her to abort. I tried to help her find another option, but we were both young and didn't know what resources were available, and I had my own baby to take care of. I could understand her boyfriend not wanting to take responsibility, but I didn't know why, when she was obviously so distraught, her doctor pushed so hard for the abortion, instead of at least suggesting an alternative. Not long after the procedure, she called me from the hospital, where she had landed after trying to kill herself.

In time, we went our separate ways, but still kept in touch. For nearly forty years, when she spoke with me, she would frequently bring up that abortion. She was angry at the baby's father and angry at the doctor who she felt had not been honest with her, and regretted that she had listened to them. She would cry, and always end the conversation by telling me how good I was for trying to help her. I was not good. I failed her, but I have to wonder, if she saw me as so good, what all of the other people in her life were doing for her. Where was her support? How can anyone say she exercised her freedom of choice, when she was only given one option? There undoubtedly have been, and continue to be, many women in similar situations whose stories will never be told.

H.57 seeks to protect a woman's right to have an abortion. For any choice to be valid, it needs to be an informed choice, freely made, without coercion, and with a thorough understanding of the consequences, as well as any alternative choices available. Where is the protection for a woman who may choose to carry her baby to term, but is feeling overwhelmed and pressured to end the pregnancy? She needs to be shown where her baby is in its development, and given information on where she can find help, if she chooses that route. I don't see any of this addressed in the proposed legislation.

According to the U.S. Constitution, all persons are guaranteed a right to life, above all other rights, with equal protection under the law. That would mean that a baby's right to life cannot be denied in favor of someone else's perceived right to control over their body or convenience. At some point in time between the moment of conception and birth, the baby becomes a person, whose right to life needs to be protected. I would maintain that it becomes a person at conception, when it receives the complete set of DNA which determines the course of its development as a unique individual, separate from its mother.

If the baby does not become a person at conception, then exactly when does that occur? This needs to be established before its life can be legally terminated. Why is a baby who is born prematurely at five, six, or seven months of gestation, and is wanted, considered a person and given support to help it survive, while another of the same age or older, who is not wanted, can be brutally murdered and cast aside like a piece of trash? This is infanticide. A life cannot be arbitrarily taken, because it is inconvenient or unwanted by someone.

Abortion is not health care, as its proponents would like us to believe, and it does not empower women. It takes unfair advantage of a woman when she is feeling most vulnerable, while also

snuffing out the life of an innocent and defenseless human being. I implore you to take a fresh look at this issue, see it for what it truly is, and work to prevent H.57 or any similar bill from ever becoming law in Vermont.

Thank you.
Deborah Dailey