

My name is Emily Nelms. I am a nurse. I used to work in the Neonatal Intensive Care Unit at UVM Medical Center before staying home with my kids.

I represent the voice of precious babies like the ones I have cared for. The babies I cared for were around the ages of 23 weeks to full term, but I even assisted with an attempted resuscitation of a 14 week-old to support the baby's parents. A nurse doesn't just care for their patient; they care for the families and individuals associated with their patient, especially in the NICU setting. People of all back grounds, faiths, social standings, and viewpoints are cared for with compassion in the NICU. I have worked with families of all socio-economic levels, some women battling drug addiction, some women that were victims of abuse, and all sorts of undesirable situations.

I am witness to the fact that premature infants are precious humans both in and outside of a mother's uterus and are deserving of legal protection. Abortion without limitation discriminates against all babies and dehumanizes anyone who is less 'developed' or 'able' without regard to their future potential.

We cannot all agree on the exact moment life starts, but most Americans do agree that it occurs at some point prior to full developmental term. National statistics show that 81% of people believe 3rd trimester abortions should be illegal (Gallup poll May 1-10, 2018). The majority of people who describe themselves as pro-choice believe in a woman's right to choose abortion YET agree that there should be term limitations. There tends to be reasonable consensus that once a fetus can survive outside of the mother, it is an independent human life with an independent right to survive and deserving of societal support. H.57 would legally assert that there is no right to human life until physical birth, contrary to the opinion of the majority.

This proposed bill states that it is a woman's right to carry her pregnancy to term and this sounds good, but it is meaningless because H.57 really only gives a woman a right to harm and not protect her developing child. If a mother who chooses to carry her child to term is physically assaulted or harmed in a way that causes her to miscarry, she cannot charge for murder of her child. H.57 is in fact a slight against woman's rights.

If a woman is going to abort her pregnancy anyway, why not experiment on the fetus which has no legal rights in order to advance science? It would give the mother a sense of accomplishment over her difficult decision. Is this morally acceptable?

I read Vermont Medical Society's post to support H.57. It was perplexing to me why medical professionals would support termination of humans without restriction at any gestational age. Don't they think we have an ethical responsibility to support life and developing humans, at some level? It was interesting to read the plea to support it in such a positive light, despite being highly controversial. Why was it written in such a biased manner with words like, "only" before giving statistics about under-age terminations. In 2016 alone, 49 under-age abortions were performed with 1 being under the age of 15! This is just under-age persons. This is not

something to be proud of in a small state like ours and to say, “only” in the body shows a lack of humanity. Not surprising given the fact that the person who wrote it, Dr. MacAfee, who performs abortions and is in a position to benefit financially. How biased!

Defenders of H.57 are quick to assert that it only codifies what is currently possible because of a lack of abortion related law. What H.57 really does is to show how Vermont law on abortion is lacking and leaves an opportunity for unspeakable atrocities. Our law needs to be updated to reflect the current majority opinion in society that life begins before physical birth.

Are you aware that the democratic co-sponsor of Virginia's similar failed abortion bill, Dawn Adams of Richmond, VA recently said how she vaguely remembers signing the bill but did so in solidarity with her colleague as a gesture for woman's rights. She has now said that she is sorry she didn't more fully read or understand the bill. The majority of Americans and the majority of Vermonters oppose laws like H.57 and you need to represent the people.

The babies I cared for in the NICU deserved a chance to experience life. Legal protection is needed for, at least, the viable babies who only need to be delivered to have that same chance.

Please do not support H.57 as it is written. Set responsible limitations that support and protect life. Thank you.