

February 5, 2019

To the Vermont House Committee on Human Services,

I am writing to you to respectfully express my opposition to bill H.57. As a Vermonter, I have been very proud of Vermont's leadership in compassionate, responsible initiatives. However, I fear H.57, through its language and legal extent, will have deep, negative implications for our identity as a state and society.

The language of H.57 lacks specificity regarding aspects of abortion services, implying that abortion rights shall be unrestricted. Conversely, and even more concerning, is the specificity of the language stripping the fetus, at any developmental stage, of independent rights. The Declaration of Independence grants us the right to life as an unalienable right, yet this bill seeks to undermine that for our most innocent and vulnerable, for those who need such protection and advocacy the very most.

The legal aspects of this bill are worrisome; however, the ethics of this bill are unconscionable. How could we ever explain this disregard for innocent and viable life to any party holding us accountable? And how does this (un)ethical evolution affect future decisions concerning life rights and quality of life of Vermonters? And how is the termination of a fetus not discrimination, at the very least, ageism?

I do not wish to undermine the existing reproductive rights to which Vermont women are already entitled. As an adoptive mother of two young boys, I understand some of the mental, emotional, financial, and physical challenges pregnant women face. I maintain a positive relationship with both birth families, and I am mindful of circumstances these families face. But there are alternatives. I am acutely aware of the peace, joy, love, and healing that can come from a team of people working together to give a child a wonderful life full of love and potential. Every child is precious and wanted by someone.

I ask that the language of bill H.57 be altered to provide protections for viable fetuses, and I ask Vermont's leaders to seek alternative solutions for meeting Vermont women's health needs while directing our energy and resources toward valuing, supporting, and nurturing new life. Please do not sacrifice our next generation for the sake of politics.

I thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

Dr. Helen Strom-Olsen
Wallingford, Vermont