

Dear, Ms. Tucker, enclosed is a link to a statement I have prepared concerning VT House bill H.57. In case the link doesn't work, I have also included the text in this email, below. Please include this in your committee's deliberations. Thank you.

With regards,  
Nathan Old

<https://docs.google.com/document/d/1m6hKtHLu7MqKvbdJAEPKHvNPGVoOzMgzImZMCMAxX0U/edit?usp=sharing>

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### **A Statement Regarding Vermont Bill H.57**

When it comes to the many debates of our current culture and all the divisions those debates are bringing to our society which threaten to render us in two, there are a multiplicity of perspectives from which to argue one's case. But in the end, arguing one's own case only ever serves to continue the division as one side must inevitably be the "winner" and the other the "loser." It is instead my intention to seek as best as is possible to enter the conversation concerning the Vermont Legislature's recent bill - H.57 - focusing upon the points on which we can universally (hopefully) agree.

Abortion, perhaps more than any other policy topic is quite personal, and because it is so personal, it also is quite emotional. We find ourselves as a society attempting to weigh the merits of protecting one who has no freedom to choose against protecting one who feels that she has no freedom to choose. The deep divisions are created as we as a society seem forced to choose which person to whom we extend our compassion. We each have different backgrounds and ideas about life, sexuality, and love which all factor into which party we choose and it seems to many impossible to remain impartial.

We could zoom the conversation out a little further and recognize that we live in a time period during which there is great confusion about human sexuality in general, of which abortion is only a part. Our public forums are filled to the brim with conversations of sexual abuse, sexual inequality, sexual health, sexual orientation, even sexual identification. We find ourselves questioning "what is even the purpose of our sexuality?" Is there any hope for it to ever bring blessing and happiness rather than the curse and pain that far too many people now experience?

Because of the deeply personal nature of these questions, public discourse about them holds a certain tension. It's clear, there are no easy answers, and yet, because our public institutions are obliged to execute justice, it is also clear that answers must be made, even if those answers fail to resolve the tension.

H.57 seeks to end the debate and the tension by pulling out the trump card, erring on the side of extreme indiscretion: remove governmental involvement altogether. Unfortunately in order to accomplish this, it must declare a fundamental reason why the government has no place in the debate. And so the bill makes the bold proclamation: "A fertilized egg, embryo, or fetus shall not have independent rights under Vermont law."

This statement, though cleverly worded, and intentionally subtle, in effect provides a bold definition to who should be considered for personhood. Substitute the words "fertilized

egg”, “embryo”, and “fetus” with words such as “slave”, “indigenous”, or “invalid” and there would rightly be public outcry. Why? Because by so doing the Legislature would be usurping its rightful authority, violating the very Laws of Nature and of Nature’s God. In these other regards, there cannot be any debate as to the personhood or humanity. Biology reveals without a shadow of doubt that these examples are human in the core of their DNA. Not only that, but each one is distinctly human, having a human genetic code unique to anyone else’s. Their lives are their own by this virtue alone. No one can claim ownership over their being, or justify choosing their continuance in existence. But what of the human offspring yet in it’s mother’s womb? Is it not likewise biologically human? Is it’s genetic code not likewise distinct even from its own mother? Under what authority does the Vermont Legislature endeavor to reclassify what constitutes humanity and personhood?

If this bill becomes law, it would be one of the most blatant acts of usurpation of authority we have yet to see on American soil since the days of slavery - an act of usurpation that violates the very foundation of civil liberties by making the claim that the Legislature is the Supreme Authority over its citizens - that there can be no higher law to which even they are accountable. In other words *the Legislature has made the claim that it is the sole arbitor of personhood.*

This opens the door to every sort of tyranny. Do we really want the people of our Legislature in Montpelier being the ones determining who constitutes personhood? There would be no end to the abuse possible when once we established this precedent.

Respectively submitted,  
Nathan Old, Corinth  
February 6, 2019

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*“6. But though this be a State of Liberty, yet it is not a State of Licence, though Man in that State have an uncontrollable Liberty, to dispose of his Person or Possessions, yet he has not Liberty to destroy himself, or so much as any Creature in his Possession, but where some nobler use, than its bare Preservation calls for it. The State of Nature has a Law of Nature to govern it, which obliges every one: And Reason, which is that Law, teaches all Mankind, who will but consult it, that being all equal and independent, no one ought to harm another in his Life, Health, Liberty, or Possessions. For Men being all the Workmanship of one Omnipotent, and infinitely wise Maker; All the Servants of one Sovereign Master, sent into the World by his order and about his business, they are his Property, whose Workmanship they are, made to last during his, not one*

*another's Pleasure...*" *Second Treatise on Civil Government*, John Locke, 1689.