

To those tasked in representing all of us in Vermont:

It is with a lot of thought and careful consideration that I write to you today concerning the bill being introduced as H.57.

I would first plead that this not be viewed as a “left vs. right” issue, but a human rights issue. The unborn are undeniably amongst the weakest and most defenseless beings. In every other instance, we as natural good human beings would be enticed to help defend and protect someone or something in need. Historically, these things may include, but are not limited to, endangered species, the environment, plants, eggs of certain animals, our ecosystem, wildlife, oceans, rivers, lakes, and waterways, disabled persons or animals, etc., all of which I agree are humanitarian efforts that should be commended. I question why, then, are we allowing the most innocent of human life to be legally terminated as a fundamental rights issue?

As I understand, this law proposes to elevate to a level of allowing a mother who is carrying a child to lose the fetus by the will and actions of another human being for which the person responsible will not be punishable or held accountable. As a mother myself, and I am sure some of you as mothers know, that careful and tireless effort is applied to maintain a level of wellness for yourself and your baby. It is heartbreaking to me that if I were involved in a traumatic event caused by another person, whether it be from abuse or recklessness, and lost my baby due to that sustained trauma, that the person responsible would not be considered guilty or punishable by Vermont law, while I would have lost something so very precious and irreplaceable because of their actions. If a home is damaged, for example, due to arson - we punish. If a newborn is killed, just days older possibly than its unprotected peers, that person would be held accountable.

Another portion of this law that is concerning to me is the lack of consideration of the pain inflicted upon the fetus. It is general scientific knowledge that the neural circuitry responsible for the most primitive response to pain, the spinal reflex, is in place by 8 weeks of fetal development and all pain receptors are developed by 20 weeks. This is the reason that physicians use anesthesia when they perform fetal in-utero surgeries. So then, are we as law makers and voters allowing willing physicians and their mothers to decide that it is okay to inflict the physical pain that abortion causes? Allowing each extremity, limb, organ, torso, cranium, etc. to be excised and in laymen’s terms, quite literally torn apart limb-by-limb? And say anesthesia is used to comfort the mother (but not the baby) by an experienced physician prior to carrying out the termination of these babies - we will now prohibit a mother to do it all to herself?

The abuse of people with a barrier to communication is tragically not unknown to mankind, as they are not able to speak for themselves about the pain or emotions that they experience. Those with mental or developmental disabilities, for example, have a long and horrific history. Only in the past 40 years has society recognized that this abuse is a serious social problem and, with this recognition, we should not then carry out this abuse to other defenseless, voiceless, viable, living humans. Humans who undeniably feel pain and have a heartbeat, just as all of you in this room do.

I firmly believe that you all chose this position to serve your community

as best as you can. Please do not let these babies, fetuses, embryos, mothers, or otherwise suffer. I propose being pro-education, pro-active, informative, and healing in nature. This bill gives a human baby in its mother's womb at any stage less rights than an Let us not go backward in such an important humanitarian effort in regards to our own kind - regardless of age, gender, abilities, or otherwise. With no specific terms and the broadened nature of this bill, all Vermonters are at risk. It is not a win for women's health or the healthcare system when this happens in this way. Whatever your reasons of supporting this as law, please genuinely and seriously reconsider.

With deepest sincerity and respect,

Rachael R. Hardy, RN

Montgomery Center