

## **Written testimony of Christina Francis, MD**

### **Submitted to Vermont State Senate in opposition to Proposal 5**

I would like to thank you for allowing me to submit this written testimony in lieu of being there in person. This issue is extremely important and I would be there in person to oppose this state Constitutional Amendment if I could. Let me start by introducing myself. My name is Dr. Christina Francis. I am a board-certified OB/GYN and have been in practice for 10 years. I currently practice as an OB/GYN Hospitalist at a large community referral hospital, where I routinely care for both low risk and high risk pregnant mothers and their children. I am also Chair of the Board of the American Association of Prolife Obstetricians and Gynecologists, a national professional organization that represents approximately 4,500 women's health care practitioners who stand for the lives and health of our female patients as well as their unborn children. Our members are mostly OB/GYN's, but also Family Practice physicians, midwives, and nurses.

I am writing to you to oppose this Constitutional amendment which would guarantee unfettered access to abortion for two reasons. First of all, abortion is not healthcare. There are zero proven health benefits to abortion and it poses significant risk to the women who undergo one. Abortions increase maternal mortality rates, increase preterm births prior to 32 weeks in future pregnancies and an increased risk of suicide and mental illness. While early delivery might be needed in the rare circumstances in which a mother's life is in danger due to pregnancy complications, abortions – the intentional killing of an innocent human being – are never needed.

As I read through the portions of the Vermont Constitution that this amendment refers to, I was inspired. In its current state, it is a document that recognizes the inherent dignity and worth of each human being. "...[A]ll persons are born equally free and independent, and have certain natural, inherent, and unalienable rights." It also recognizes that the purpose of the government and the Constitution is to be "for the common benefit, protection, and security of the people." I agree that these protections should not confer special advantages upon the privileged. This is exactly why I oppose this amendment. Unborn fetal human beings are the most vulnerable population of people that exist in our society. They have no way to speak for or protect themselves. They are completely reliant upon born citizens for their protection, starting with their mothers, but extending to the rest of us. Make no mistake – these are living human beings from the moment of fertilization. Science proves this beyond a shadow of a doubt. They may be small human beings, but they are human beings the same as you and I, and therefore are deserving of all of the protections of this Constitution. When we decide that one group of human beings matter more than another group, the consequences are disastrous. History is full of examples of the harm of saying that a group of human beings are not persons and therefore do not deserve the same protections as the rest of us. This is exactly what this amendment does – it states that fetal human beings don't matter, and therefore are not entitled to the rights that you and I are. Take caution – once we condone this type of bigotry towards vulnerable fetal human beings, the road will be quick to bigotry towards other groups of human beings.

As an OB/GYN, I can respect the dignity and autonomy of my female patients without condoning the killing of their children. In fact, I am respecting their autonomy more by informing them of the potential risks of abortion as well as the humanity of their unborn children. The abortion industry does not provide the same respect for their ability to make an informed decision by honestly divulging the potential risks of abortion and also demeans women by telling them the only way for them to truly

succeed is to hold tightly to the “right” to kill their children. This is a bold faced lie that I, as a woman and as a physician, strenuously object to.

If you truly care about the citizens of this state, you will oppose this amendment and focus, instead, on measures that will truly improve women and children’s lives.

I have submitted a supplementary document if you would like additional information on what abortion does to women.