

To Vermont State House  
Re: Proposal 5, to Add Abortion to the Vermont Constitution

Dear sir/madam,

With all the issues Vermont is facing, I find it appalling that the first issue the House of Representatives is planning to take up in January is the murder of innocent babies. I do not understand the fascination with the legalization of killing children. Has our morality and compassion sunk to that level? Have we become so callous that we can murder a child and discard its remains like household garbage; or worse sell its parts for money? If my dog had puppies and I killed them because I did not want them or found them inconvenient, there would be a public outcry from these same abortion advocates to have me put in prison. Think Michael Vick. We gloss over this horrendous act by giving it pretty names such as the Reproductive Liberty Amendment, Pro-choice, or A Woman's Right to Choose. At the end of the day, it is still the murder of a baby who had no fault in the actions of two irresponsible adults. The Legislature said it hoped to "enshrine" the right to abortion. Think about that word you chose to use. To enshrine means to preserve or cherish as sacred. Life is a gift from God. Human life is sacred and is to be cherished and preserved. How can one then say we should enshrine the murder of innocent beings that cannot speak on their own behalf? It is time we start taking a serious look at those we have sent to Montpelier to represent us and make some changes. It is time we turn back to God before it is too late.

Sincerely,

Morris W. Holt  
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Thank you, My name is Samantha, I'm a Springfield vermont resident and small business owner.

I moved to Vermont in 2018 from Arizona. Reproductive rights were a big reason for our move. I have a chromosome abnormally that puts me at a great risk for miscarriage and stillbirth.

In Arizona, if I was given a incompatible with life diagnosis, I would have had a mandatory ultrasound, 24 hour wait period and since it can only be diagnosed through invasive testing done after 10 weeks, I would have had 1 clinic in the entire state who would help me. I moved here knowing Vermont would never treat me this way. Would never torture me during the worst days of my life.

I have been pregnant 11 times. I have miscarried 8 times and I am blessed to have 3 healthy children. I have never needed abortion care. I am lucky.

I am in support groups for my balanced translocation. Daily people with my condition share their stories. Most members from other countries are shocked and sickened to hear of the struggles the American members have to go through for proper care. They don't understand why abortion is political. They don't understand how care can be so different from state to state.

I have my third child because I moved here and felt safe to try again, felt I would receive proper care if the worse was to happen.

One of my children shares my balanced translocation. I want them to feel that freedom to start a family if and when they feel the time is right for them. Their right isn't secure in the rest of the country as we wait to see if Roe falls. But please make Vermont a protected place for reproductive rights. Please make this a safe place for all Vermonters like me, like my child. Please vote to pass the reproductive liberty amendment.

Thank you for your time.

January 25, 2022

Dear Members of House Human Services Committee –

I'm writing regarding your Amendment to our Constitution – soon to be voted on. I am one of the many who counsel men and women after an abortion. They tell me endlessly that the death of their child immediately took away their soul – that they have been grieving for a lifetime. No matter what we say to comfort them, they are not able to forgive themselves for something that didn't need to happen. I'm thinking that if everyone I counsel is still grieving and depressed, what kind of a society are we promoting if we want an endless number of these abortions to take place. Haven't we already had enough if sixty-five million babies have died – traumatizing their parents for a lifetime. Isn't there anything we can think to do to reverse this trend – to save our citizens - a job you signed up for?

I'm sorry that your Amendment will not solve the problem – and you and I will, most likely, be deceased ourselves when future generations will have to deal with this – leaving the cleanup to them. You have been given an important position in our State's history - Do you really want to be remembered for a gesture of endless killing of our citizens – here in Vermont and across the nation. I am grateful for your very thoughtful consideration of reversing your Amendment to save lives rather than to destroy them.

Very best,

Sara Conlon Nevin  
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Northfield, VT 05663  
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Dear committee members, my name is Morgan Sekhon and I am doing my training in Obstetrics & Gynecology residency at the University of Vermont Medical Center. Protection of reproductive liberty and the guaranteed right to an abortion provides options. Devastated by the diagnosis of fetal triploidy, several fetal anomalies, and a placenta concerning for a rare and potentially life-threatening molar pregnancy – a young woman in the second trimester of her pregnancy had *options* – the basic human right to decide to proceed with an induction of labor to terminate her pregnancy and halt the abnormal placental growth before developing a rare form of cancer from abnormal placental tissue. When the placental pathology returned, confirming a molar pregnancy that had not yet invaded into her uterus, she realized that her decision to end the pregnancy was not just an option but a treatment. It is a treatment that prevented her from additional imaging, chemotherapy and surgery, and one that has the potential to lessen the burden of her loss by protecting her reproductive options for future pregnancies – if she chooses. It is a treatment that all women should have access to. In the meantime, under Proposition 5, she has the choice to continue to contracept as she mourns the loss of her abnormal pregnancy.

Thank you again for allowing me the opportunity to write on this topic and for your continued support of women's health, reproductive justice, and for trusting women with the freedom to make their own choices.

Morgan Sekhon, MD  
PGY-2 Obstetrics & Gynecology

Dear committee members, my name is Hayley Roberts and I am in the final year of training for Obstetrics & Gynecology residency at the University of Vermont Medical Center. Thank you for the opportunity to write in support of the Prop 5 amendment. It is something I feel incredibly passionate about. Reproductive rights are an integral part of the decisions made by the patients we care for day in and day out. Whether it is helping a patient conceive who strongly desires biologic children, using contraception to plan the timing of starting a family, or terminating a pregnancy that is undesired, the right for a patient to make their own choice is crucial. We counsel all patients on the risks and benefits of any medical choice, but ultimately support them wholeheartedly in their right to choose what is best for their unique situation, futures and bodies.

As physicians, we take the Hippocratic oath at the beginning of our medical school training, promising to uphold specific ethical standards as we embark in the care of patients. These principles include the respect for patient autonomy, justice, acting in the best interests of our patients and non-maleficence or doing no harm. I live these principles on a daily basis and use them to guide the care that I provide for patients, in particular reproductive health care.

These principles allow me to trust the women that I care for as they make deeply personal decisions. These principles allow me the opportunity to provide patients with evidence-based information that is unique to their situation so that they have the autonomy to decide the right path for them.

Through my residency training, I have taken to heart the principle of beneficence, or acting in the best interests of my patients. In doing so, I feel it is my responsibility to provide a patient with all of the options for management of their unique situation. I have learned to step back and give the patient the time and space they need to consider their options, be it management of a cancer of the uterus, a sexually transmitted infection or an unplanned pregnancy. While patients may choose a different option than I recommend or think is best, I am committed to supporting them through their decision and trust their autonomy.

There are limitless examples I could give of clinical scenarios that convey the importance of protecting patient's autonomy with reproductive rights. One story that has stuck with me is about a 41-year-old patient who presented to the clinic in a panic after a surprise positive home pregnancy test. She and her husband had four children at home whom they loved and wanted to provide the best lives for. They had been struggling financially and couldn't imagine having another pregnancy 10 years since their last. I explained they didn't have to justify any choice they came to and I would be here to support them no matter what. After discussing all of the possible management options with discussion of medical benefits and risks of each, they decided to terminate the pregnancy with medication. They were visibly heartbroken but felt confident in their decision.

Patient autonomy, beneficence, non-maleficence and justice are core values that each physician should uphold in every patient encounter. Whether it is a patient deciding to decline a surgery or chemotherapy for a new cancer diagnosis or someone deciding to terminate a

pregnancy, the values in place to allow them to freely make the decision without judgement are the same. Our job is to support and care for these patients in a way that keeps them as healthy and safe as possible. Reproductive rights should not come down to what political party you support, religious beliefs you have or geographic location you are from. These are human rights that should be protected.

Thank you again for allowing me the opportunity to write on this topic and for your continued support of women's health, reproductive justice, and for trusting women.

Hayley Roberts, MD  
PGY-4 Obstetrics & Gynecology

My name is Howard Cohen. I live in Bennington VT. I am the rabbi emeritus of Congregation Beth El, also located in Bennington.

I support the Reproductive Liberty Amendment for three reasons. These are not presented in order of importance. They are all equally important reasons why I support the Reproductive Liberty Amendment.

#1 I firmly believe that each of us should be able to make our own decisions in life – no matter who we are, where we live, or the amount of money we have.

#2 As the father of two daughters I firmly believe that they along with everyone else should have the freedom to plan their futures, and choose for themselves whether and/or when to have children. Similarly, important reproductive health care decisions should be guided by their health and wellbeing concerns.

#3 As a rabbi steeped in Jewish textual knowledge and wisdom, it is important for me to say that Jewish tradition and law upholds an individual's right to personal reproductive autonomy.

In conclusion, Vermont can set an example of what is possible. With the fate of Roe v. Wade hanging in the balance, state-level protections are vital to safeguarding access to reproductive healthcare. Amending our state constitution is the best way to protect reproductive freedom in Vermont long-term.

Susan Connerty  
711 Barnes Hill Road  
Stowe, Vermont 05672

January 26, 2022

Dear House and Human Services Committee,

Thank you for this opportunity to give public comment on Proposal 5. I urge you to vote "no". We already have abortion laws in place. No matter what the Supreme Court decides about Roe vs. Wade, Vermont law will not be affected. Not only is Proposal 5 awful, it's unnecessary.

"Enjoying and defending life and liberty, acquiring, possessing and protecting property, and pursuing and obtaining happiness and safety," are all "natural, inherent, and unalienable rights" in Chapter 1, Article 1 of Vermont's Constitution. Reproductive rights are not even close to the same category as these natural rights and therefore, do not belong in Vermont's Constitution.

How can we, in Vermont, give legal protections to plants and animals, and not protect unborn children? Here we are, importing families to offset our aging population, overlooking our greatest resource here, natural born Vermonters. We need to encourage growing families and protect preborn children.

Proposal 5 guarantees every Vermonter, regardless of age, "reproductive autonomy". Do you really want parents excluded from serious decisions (abortion, transgender hormones, surgery, sterilization, ...) regarding their minor children? Our two children are witnesses to the far better solution of adoption and parental involvement.

It is not fair for taxpayers to pay for other people's reproductive choices.

How will medical professionals conscientiously objecting to participation in procedures they find morally reprehensible or against their best medical judgement be protected? Will we lose the best, most compassionate and brightest from our medical community?

Please, vote "no" against simply dreadful Proposal 5.

Sincerely,  
Susan Connerty



My name is Allie Stickney. I live in Shelburne, Vermont.

I moved to Vermont in 1968, a mother with two young children, when abortion was not legal here or Planned Parenthood Problem Pregnancy Team, a group of trained volunteers based in Burlington where to access a safe, though not necessarily legal, abortion. What we were doing -- providing info referrals were to Dr. Henry Morgentaler, a physician in Montreal. I can remember my anticipation w/ voice of a young woman. Instead, the very first caller was a man, a self-described middle-aged man were faced with an unintended pregnancy. He and his wife were desperate. I've never forgotten his

The need to make the most personal of choices about our reproductive lives touches all people. Religion, ethnicity, religion, sexual orientation or gender, all people deserve the respect and freedom to wrest from government intrusion. The government has no role in those choices. The 1973 Supreme Court choices through the last 49 years.

But most likely we will face an altered world once the Supreme Court rules in the coming six months right. If, as it appears, the US Supreme Court will declare there is no such fundamental constitutional assure that it remains a sanctuary of safety, a place where all people can safely make voluntary dec

The Reproductive Liberty Amendment, Proposal 5, is crafted so that it makes clear the intent - to protect reproductive decisions, whether it is to become a parent, use temporary or permanent birth control ( will not only continue to provide the protections of personal choice for Vermont citizens for their most are protected into the future regardless of a politician's belief or who sits in the governor's chair or w

When I was a young woman, my world had too many stories, both known or only hinted at, of desperate dangerous abortions, of abortions secured at a terrible price - loss of one's fertility - of safe abortior world, of young women "going away to visit an aunt" for a few months, until a baby was delivered ar up and hidden away.

Let Vermont's story be one of protection, protection of the most basic intimate and human rights of p children, the right of women to be in charge of their own bodies, the right of all citizens to the protec



I submit this testimony specifically to comment on Proposal 5, which proposes to affirm in the Vermont constitution “an individual’s right to personal reproductive autonomy.”

To be clear and forthright as to my background, I am a pastor in the Christian tradition. I personally adhere to ideals and strict precepts regarding the morals, rights, and duties of men and women, including all things that pertain to the human faculties of reproduction. My faith has indeed given me a strong moral code to which I feel compelled to “live up to.” My faith has also given me great examples of generosity, of heroism, and of love and tenacity in the examples of family choices, the many dramatic considerations in reproductive decisions.

I am well aware that the ethical criteria to which I hold myself are far more strict than any set of laws or constitutional obligations that could be imposed by the state of Vermont. Yet this only strengthens my hopes to dialogue about important issues as I here explain my concerns, that Proposal 5 is contradictory in its implications for society, or at least dangerously unsatisfactory in its articulation.

I state this not because Proposal 5 proposes to exclude government imposition of most all moral codes pertaining to choices proximate or remote to the accomplishment of “reproduction,” but because it is negligent in its failure to affirm, even to recognize, positive responsibilities which ought to be part of all reproductive choices. The view of autonomy that Proposal 5 pushes forward is dangerously imbalanced, in favor of personal wishes without care for societal responsibilities. Those responsibilities must certainly apply in some ways to reproductive choices. Ideally some specific responsibilities would be articulated in Proposal 5, if not in the Article of Amendment. Merely to affirm that some responsibilities exist would be a start. The abandonment of all responsibilities (say, for example, towards today’s children let alone tomorrow’s) is synonymous with the very destruction of society.

Our state constitution is filled with imperatives, duties, and various objectives which “ought” to be done. It is also true that a key purpose of the constitution is to enumerate those things that the government “ought not” do in the face of citizen’s rights. Yet I propose to the people of Vermont that the government most certainly “ought not” inflate the sense of individualism and autonomy to such a degree that the sense of familial and communal responsibility is neglected and rendered to a legal trash bin. Highlighting individual autonomy, as attached exclusively to sexual matters by the category of “reproductive,” seems to do just this.

Our constitution insists upon the positive responsibility to defend the life and the rights of citizens “born equally free and independent [with] certain natural, inherent, and unalienable rights.” The unanswered question must be brought up, of why the same rights, enumerated after birth, seem to be denied categorically to all human beings prior to the minute of their birth. I propose that the question reveals a dilemma almost especially from the pro-choice standpoint. Reproductive autonomy is said to include, but not be limited to, the defense of the reproductive rights for persons contemplating either the continuation of, or the termination of, a pregnancy. If this reproductive autonomy is nothing more than this, then Proposal 5 is indeed mere legal jargon to assert abortion rights in the constitution. I might make a pragmatic concession that the people of Vermont could decide on the issue, the legal jargon being explained. But if this autonomy

extends beyond the choices impacting on pregnancy, then it must impact upon the choices to parent children, and it must logically be limited by responsibility. Parenting is nearly the opposite of autonomy precisely in the taking up of praiseworthy responsibilities for other persons: by birth, by adoption, even by foster parenting. I think it is plain to see the limits of glorifying the so-called "liberty and dignity to determine one's own life course" when choices of sexuality and reproduction are brought forward devoid of any thought pertaining to responsibilities for family, for community, and for society.

I conclude with several questions elicited here. Are Vermonters prepared to draw the appropriate lines between autonomy and responsibility that are neglected in this proposal? Will Vermonters be afforded just and fair opportunities to negotiate the balance of these responsibilities in the public sphere, and determine the proper measure with which to represent them in law? Or will our representatives in Montpelier impose, at some indeterminate, later date the responsibilities that they decide should be applicable to all citizens on the issues of reproduction, sexuality, and parenting choices?

Rev. Timothy Naples

South Burlington