

Lara Ilyas  
Augusta  
LD 975

Esteemed Committee Members:

I regret that I am unable to testify in person. I am a physician in the community, as well as a mother who loves her children fiercely. While I also strongly oppose LD 253, LD 684, LD 886, LD 887, and LD 1007, I am writing specifically to voice my objection to LD 975. Legally defining personhood at conception puts women throughout the state at risk; there is too much gray area in pregnancy. Proponents of this act will claim that women will be protected rather than harmed, but experience has shown us otherwise; we have already seen this in other states that have criminalized abortion.

Furthermore, denying abortion access is ethically wrong. Please indulge me in a scenario:

When my nephew was a toddler, he spent a large portion of his life in the hospital due to a blood disorder. A bone marrow transplant would cure him. Imagine that his uncle is a perfect match but chooses not to donate. Perhaps he is worried it won't work and the boy will get sicker. Perhaps he is afraid of having complications himself. Perhaps his religion forbids him from donating. His reasons are inconsequential. We can disagree with his choice, we can be angry with him, but he still has jurisdiction over his own body. We cannot legally force him to give of his body to help another — even if the other person is a child, and even if that child will die. Would this scenario be any different if it was my nephew's father who was a match? Or his mother? Why would it be different if my nephew was still a fetus?

I recognize that the topic of abortion raises a large mess of existential questions — all of which are uncomfortable and many of which are unanswerable. However, these questions are for each of us to determine within ourselves, not for the state to decide for us. I have yet to meet a woman who sought an abortion and took the decision lightly. If you would like to protect women, please start by trusting us. These decisions need to always remain in women's hands, not the state's.