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LD 975

Thank you for the opportunity to submit this testimony in opposition to LD 975, which would criminalize abortion by defining a fetus as a human being.

One of the most widely accepted scientific definitions of life is "a self-sustaining chemical system capable of Darwinian evolution." A fetus is not self-sustaining. It lives only because the mother lives. If the mother dies, the fetus dies. Therefore, a fetus does not meet the definition of life.

Scientifically speaking, a human being is a primate distinguished by a highly developed brain, articulate speech, abstract reasoning, and an erect body carriage, with the capacity for tool use, complex symbolic language, and self-awareness. A fetus does not meet this definition either. In the first trimester, the brain is only beginning to develop, for example.

We set out on a slippery slope by creating a law in which a fetus is designated as a human being with the same rights as the woman carrying it. The mother is, absolutely, alive and is, absolutely, a human being. As such, she deserves the full protection of the law. She should not have to sacrifice her rights or her life because she is pregnant, especially if the pregnancy endangers her life or health. Such decisions should be made only by the women themselves and their doctors. No one else should be involved.

If the mother became pregnant through sexual assault or incest, carrying the pregnancy to term threatens her mental health. Until society has sufficient means to care for the woman's mental health and any offspring created by assault, we have no business telling a woman she must give birth. Everyone knows we're nowhere near that.

I urge you to reject LD 975. Criminalizing abortion sends the message that women's lives are unimportant. In practice, it makes women's lives unimportant. Forcing women to give birth only compounds other problems that exist in society. Let's not compound the problems that already exist and protect women as the human beings they most certainly are.

Thank you.