

Good morning, members of the committee and distinguished guests. My name is Lily Nihill, and I am a senior at Freeport High School. I stand before you today to speak out against the proposed bill that seeks to repeal the laws authorizing abortion in the state and redefine when human life begins.

As young people, we are often told that the future is in our hands. We are encouraged to think critically, to challenge ideas, and to stand up for what is right. Today, I want to challenge this proposed bill—not just for what it seeks to do in terms of policy, but for the profound consequences, it would have on the rights, autonomy, and health of individuals in our community.

First and foremost, the repeal of abortion rights under this bill would strip away an essential healthcare option for women and individuals who can become pregnant. The right to make decisions about one's own body is fundamental to the freedom we cherish in this country. Abortion is a deeply personal choice, and no one should be forced to carry a pregnancy against their will.

This bill, by removing the right to abortion, would be pushing individuals into impossible situations—whether it's someone whose health is at risk, someone who cannot financially support a child, or someone who simply is not ready for the responsibility. We must ask ourselves: Why should we deny people the choice to make decisions that are best for their own lives, based on their own circumstances, health, and future?

Secondly, the proposal to redefine "person" or "human being" as beginning at the moment of conception is a deeply troubling step toward limiting the rights of pregnant individuals. The bill would effectively equate the status of a fertilized egg with that of a living, breathing person—an idea that contradicts not only medical science but also ethical principles.

The moment of conception does not equate to the moment a person is born. A fertilized egg, while it may have the potential to develop into a person, is not yet a person in the full legal and moral sense. By granting "personhood" to something that is not yet a person, this bill risks treating pregnant individuals as mere vessels for a fetus, without regard for their rights, health, and well-being.

Furthermore, this bill's broader implications on laws involving assault—specifically domestic violence assault on pregnant individuals—are concerning. By granting full personhood rights to a fetus, the law would also have the power to redefine what constitutes assault or harm to a pregnant individual. This could potentially lead to the criminalization of many everyday medical procedures, such as certain forms of birth control or miscarriages, or even everyday actions like physical activity during pregnancy.

We cannot ignore the fact that this bill would also limit access to necessary healthcare. If abortion and reproductive healthcare are no longer legal, individuals may be forced to seek unsafe, illegal options. We cannot afford to return to a time when people resorted to dangerous methods, putting their lives at risk.

We, as a society, should be empowering individuals to make the best decisions for themselves. We should be supporting comprehensive sex education, access to contraceptives, and healthcare for all—so that we can prevent unwanted pregnancies and provide the necessary resources for those who choose to parent. Repealing abortion rights and redefining personhood will not solve these issues; it will only create more harm, more pain, and more obstacles to personal freedom.

In conclusion, the proposed bill is a step backward for the rights of women and all individuals who can become pregnant. It denies them the right to make choices about their bodies and undermines their autonomy. It risks criminalizing healthcare and undermining the personal freedoms we hold dear.

I urge you all to reject this bill. Let's not regress into policies that limit personal freedom and health. Let's build a future where individuals have the power to make choices that are right for them—where we respect people's autonomy, health, and well-being. Together, we can work toward a more just, compassionate, and informed society.

Thank you.