

Testimony of Mary Akerstrom in Opposition to House Bill 2253

House Federal and State Affairs Committee, February 20, 2013

Mr. Chairman and members of the committee,

Women who are free to choose abortion are also free to choose whether they have a child, or whether they give a child up for adoption. I was faced with this decision at age 17, unwed, still in high school, and it was mine alone. I was fortunate at that time to have access to all the information concerning each option. This bill will not only dictate whether a woman can have access to abortion services, but it will also restrict her access to information about pregnancy and childbirth.

Life does not begin at fertilization, it begins at birth. A zygote is not a viable human being. A fetus less than 32 weeks gestation will face many trials of survival. If we are to attempt to create legislation based on biology, let us stick to the facts.

The state cannot regulate an individual's health care. The issues of pregnancy are personal, and not a matter of state affairs. No woman who may consider abortion takes this choice lightly. There are usually many factors in a person's life that cannot be addressed by legislature. The state cannot restrict education, including the topic of sexuality, birth control, childbirth, and abortion. This bill is an infringement of individual rights, and specifically targets women's rights.

In St. Louis, Washington University researchers found that abortions decreased when birth control was freely available to all women. (Mother Jones, Erika Eichelberger) Poor & low income women are 5 times as likely to experience unwanted pregnancies, and would benefit from clinics who provide free, comprehensive health care and birth control education. Bill Moyers reports that 69% of women seeking abortion are economically disadvantaged, and 6 out of 10 women seeking abortion already have a child.

Justice Henry Blackburn wrote "The detriment that the State would impose on the pregnant woman by denying this choice altogether is apparent...Maternity, or additional offspring may force upon the woman a distressful life and future. Psychological harm may be imminent. Mental and physical health may be taxed by child care. There is also the distress, with all concerned, associated with the unwanted child, and there is the problem of bringing a child into a family already unable, psychologically or otherwise, to care for it."

Thank you,

Mary Akerstrom

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