

Kansas House Committee on Federal and State Affairs

HCR 5003 – Value Them Both Constitutional Amendment for Life - Proponent

January 15, 2021

Dear Chairman Barker and Members of the Committee,

My name is Jonathan Scrafford; I am an obstetrician-gynecologist practicing in Wichita, KS. Thank you for the opportunity to express my support for the *Value Them Both* Constitutional Amendment, which I understand would ensure the role of legislation regarding abortion will remain in the hands of Kansas citizens and their elected representatives.

As a native son of Kansas, I am fully invested in affirming the rights and dignity of every human being in this great state. Having considered a wide range of perspectives on issues related to abortion during my undergraduate education in California and my medical education and training in Minnesota, I returned to my hometown of Wichita in 2017 to serve the community that I pray I may be blessed to continue serving throughout my professional life.

In my work as an obstetrician-gynecologist, I am always honored to share in the joy a mother and her family have when a child is born. My work also at times involves unfathomable challenges and suffering when difficulties arise during pregnancy that threaten the wellbeing of the mother, her unborn child, or both. In my practice, I consider every living human being as having dignity, and I aim to serve mother and child with my full capabilities.

Modern medicine makes more and more clear over time the status of the unborn child. For example, the mere notion of fetal surgery in the womb affirms the role of the unborn child as patient. Ever-extending frontiers in gestational ages at which premature babies can survive outside the womb show the true value of what may have been mistaken for mere potential. Nevertheless, these advances merely emphasize that which we know of ourselves: that every human being is to be treated with dignity regardless of his or her stage of development.

Last year, the Kansas Supreme Court has interpreted a virtually absolute right to abortion from our state's constitution. This right allows some members of our society – those who have been born – to end the lives of the most vulnerable in our society: those who have not yet been born. The field of medicine offers no objective criteria by which to separate living human beings deserving of rights from those undeserving of rights. It is thus deeply distressing to me as a physician to see that the so-called right to abortion does exactly that: to divide living human beings, on the basis of their stage of development, into classes with different fundamental rights. Such a right flies in the face of science and my own clinical experience. A woman's right to determine what she does with her own body should be respected for her entire life, not only the portion of her life after she is born.

I am fully aware that the issue of abortion is highly emotional on an individual level and in the public square at large. So, how can we resolve contrasting viewpoints on an issue so fundamentally important as to whether the right to one's own body begins before or after she is born? The *Value Them Both* constitutional Amendment proposed today would restore the rightful role of the people of Kansas and their elected representatives to guide public policy on such questions. I support such an initiative. It gives citizens a voice in this contentious debate, providing them an opportunity to protect the most vulnerable members of our society – unborn children – as well as their mothers.

The *Value Them Both* Constitutional Amendment provides the people of Kansas the chance to acknowledge for all living human beings the same rights and protections we demand for ourselves and which we demand for women in our society. As a physician dedicated to women's health in my home state of Kansas, I firmly believe that every woman in this great state has a right to her body, even when she is still in the womb.

Thank you for this opportunity and for all your work for the people of Kansas.