

January 14, 2021

Members of the House Federal and State Affairs Committee,

My name is Ali Haynes, and I am a Pastor in the United Methodist Church. I serve a local congregation in Overland Park, KS. More than that, I am a mother, a wife, a daughter, a sister, a friend and a woman who has seen what happens when the government attempts to enter the room of a pregnant woman and her doctor.

As a Pastor in the UMC, we believe in the sanctity of life - all life, not just the life of the unborn child but also the life of the mother. I believe that a woman's right to choose is between her and her doctor and the church, the government and anyone else who believes they have a say in difficult decisions need to understand the reality of what a woman faces when she sits in that room.

In my former career, I worked with victims of domestic violence. I sat with women as they came to the realization that their partner had been controlling their reproductive health during their entire relationship. That their partner had tampered with her birth control, that their partner had threatened their life if they had the procedure to terminate and that their partner never truly cared about the children but about the control they had over the woman; simply as a vessel in which children can be held. When the government attempts to control the reproductive rights of women, they are also placing power and control over a woman and her body just as the abusive partner did.

As a survivor of sexual assault, I am grateful for the options to have access to Plan B and abortion care if it had come to that. I have sat with other survivors of assault that cannot fathom carrying a child of the person that violated them in a way that is unspeakable. As a country, as a people we should never expect a woman to carry that trauma with her and bring a child into the world that could potentially harm the survivor and child.

As a mother, I see the value of life. I see the beauty in children and I see that I had the CHOICE to have my children. To conceive them in love, to long for their births and to provide them with the love and care they needed once born.

Children everyday are born into this world with the promise from anti-choice groups that they will be taken care of. Anti-choice groups will assist a woman through her pregnancy yet once a child is born, they no longer care about the worth of the child or how the child is taken care of. Financial resources are few and far between, health care is not always attainable, children end up in the foster care system and the promise of being cared for is no longer focused on the CHILD but again on another pregnant woman seeking help.

I urge you to oppose this bill. This bill will only harm women and children further. Agencies, such as Planned Parenthood, are there to provide counsel and support to women seeking pregnancy advice. They offer real facts, real support and understanding of a woman's situation. Beyond that, Planned Parenthood provides access to birth control, cancer screening and women's health care.

Our role in this life is to care for ALL of God's people, including the woman seeking abortion services. Even if we do not agree, the decision is between her and her doctor. As I said above, there is no room for the government in the doctor's office.

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As clergy, a mom, and a woman, I ask that you oppose this bill and uphold the reproductive rights of women. It is our role to care for one another and by opposing this bill, we are caring for the rights of women and how far women have come to ensure their own protection and freedom.

Sincerely,

Rev. Ali Haynes

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