

Re: Senate Bill 6 (SB-6)

Senate Bill 6 discusses protecting corporations and organizations from government interference based on religious and moral beliefs, however in my personal experience, this bill is far too broad.

After 4 years of trying to get pregnant, extensively exploring adoption, 2 rounds of in vitro (IVF), 2 rounds of frozen embryo transfers, and a miscarriage, my husband finally got there in July of 2016. We were utterly thrilled. The pregnancy was going great until our daughter Grace Pearl's anatomy ultrasound to evaluate all of her organs, which happens between 18 and 22 weeks. Our excitement over seeing pictures of our beloved daughter slowly turned to uncertainty, panic and then despair. Her kidneys were huge and full of cysts. There was no amniotic fluid around her body. Without this fluid, her lungs would never develop. When our doctor told us that her condition, Multicystic Dysplastic Kidney Disease, was 100% fatal at such an early onset, and having affected both kidneys, we sobbed and sobbed. Grace's diagnosis was confirmed independently by, at the time, three specialists, and we would have done anything to change the outcome.

We had no great option. We could wait and hope for a miracle, knowing she'd either be born into immense pain without functioning lungs, or she'd be stillborn. In addition we had to balance the reality that continuing a pregnancy that had no chance of survival would only increase the risk to my health. In the meantime, Grace's nervous system would be developing more and more. She would enter into the third trimester of pregnancy with the possibility that she'd experience more pain the longer I was pregnant with her, without amniotic fluid to provide cushion and comfort. Her organs would likely be crushed by my body. We were informed by all of our doctors that the latest research supports that fetuses do not likely feel pain until the third trimester (28 weeks), when the connections in their brain are more developed. My husband and I together decided our best and most compassionate option was to terminate the pregnancy to save Grace that pain.

Please know that our decision to terminate the pregnancy was one that we made out of immense love, and was terribly difficult. We wanted Grace to experience no pain or suffering, and this was the least painful thing we could do for her. They cut her umbilical cord prior to the termination to ensure her heart would stop beating and she'd have as peaceful of an experience as possible.

While our decision was very painful to make, we felt that this was the only moral choice we could make; the idea of being forced to continue to carry Grace felt beyond cruel. Proposing a bill that protects only those that use moral reasons to be anti-abortion, but not protect those of us that need an abortion for moral reasons is unfair, hypocritical and flawed.

The bill discusses allowing organizations to discriminate based on religious beliefs, but the United States is a secular nation, and furthermore it has been my husband's and my experience that there isn't even agreement within religion individuals on how to approach and treat

situations like ours. You could in effect be forcing a religious individual to act against their beliefs by allowing a corporation to act on their behalf in the name of their religion. Jim was raised Catholic, and we have many Catholics in our families, and many have shown us love and support for our decision - they know it was done with love and cost us deeply. Jim's mentor from college, a nun of over 50 years, has stated that the government has no place in the space of reproductive rights; that God will guide our conscience, and we 100% did what we felt was right. Many of these people would not support this bill even though they are religious.

Additionally, where does this lead? Can in turn doctors decline to see or advise me because of their moral oppositions? At what point does this interfere with the Hippocratic Oath? Will a doctor be allowed ask all of his female patients if they have had an abortion even if it's not medically-relevant? What about the men that impregnate women that get abortions?

SB-6 proposes a very slippery slope. We need thoughtful, inclusive, intelligent laws, not ones that can so blatantly and easily harm all women, including the unborn they purport to protect. If a law can allow those using contraception, pregnant, and those that have terminated pregnancy, it literally simply allows women to be discriminated against, as this includes nearly every state a women of reproductive age can be in unless she is abstinent. Is this truly what we want?

I beg you to know the full impact of wanting abortion made more difficult for people to obtain/less safe of a procedure, and discriminating against those that make this choice. I have grappled with the hell of choosing to end my wanted child's life every single day, and if you think you wouldn't make the same decision we did, please be grateful you very likely haven't had to. Know that we are the people you're hurting, Grace is the baby you'd be hurting. We aren't some hypothetical people who no longer want to be pregnant because it's inconvenient. We are people that have chased this dream harder than anything else in our lives, and were put in a terrible position and thankfully, had the right to do what was best for our very, very loved baby girl. Please don't make it even harder for people like us in the future, and reject this legislation.