

HB 20-1098 Late Term Abortion Testimony

I'm Eric Banner, a minister at Jefferson Unitarian Church located in between Wheat Ridge and Golden and I am member of the board of the Women's Freedom Fund, founded more than 30 years ago as a faith-based fund to help women who seek an abortion procedure, but struggling to pay for it. I am here today to testify in opposition to HB20-1098. As a minister I am regularly called upon by our members to consult on difficult life circumstances, question about life and death, about dignity and compassion.

My faith community has been on the record supporting the right of women to control their own reproductive lives without government interference. For many decades, even before Roe vs. Wade, our churches have stood with women and their families on the basic principle that freedom to choose if or when to have a child is not the business of any government official or agency. Our faith, arising out the Christian tradition, has always stood for the freedom of people to make their own decisions on the matters most important to them, and the recognition that what is the right decision for one cannot be assumed to be the right decision for all.

This bill asks the state to intervene in the worst possible way in the worst possible moment a woman's life and have the government tell her what to do with her body and most often with her very wanted pregnancy. What I know from the women who our fund has helped over the years who have had third trimester abortions is that virtually every one is the end of a pregnancy that was very much wanted, and that is ending in pain, sorrow, and loss, because something that could not be seen in sonograms earlier in the pregnancy has now become clear. Missing portions of the brain. A case of pre-eclampsia that threatens not just to end the pregnancy, but to kill the pregnant woman herself. Whole organ systems that never developed, and never will.

Often these abortions happen after the news has already been shared, baby showers held, nurseries painted and support from family, friends and churches already planned. I will never forget the memorial service I led some years ago for a young woman, barely 25 years old, who died, leaving behind a grieving husband and parents and friends, while home alone because her husband was deployed when preeclampsia took her life. We can never forget women like her, women who face the awful choice of ending a pregnancy, or losing their own lives. We can never forget the women who sit with their husbands and doctors to hear the news that if they carry a pregnancy to term the baby that is delivered will die within minutes or hours because they cannot breathe on their own.

We must never forget that painful as they often are, it is almost always the case that a later term abortion is the tragic end to a tragic discovery that no one wanted. In those moments it is our job, mine as a minister, yours as elected officials, ours as a community, to walk in mourning with the women who need this care, not stand in their way, with even more tragic consequences to come.