

January 9, 2023

Honorable Members of the Minnesota House and Minnesota Senate:

My name is Michael Blissenbach, and I am an attorney who lives in Apple Valley, Minnesota. I mostly grew up in Hastings, Minnesota and I received both my bachelors and law degrees from the University of St. Thomas. The views I express in this letter are my own personal views and are not necessarily the views of any other individual or organization. Also, I speak solely in my personal capacity and not in my professional capacity.

I write to you today to share with you a story, the story of my youngest sister, Connie Blissenbach, whose life on this earth was a short one. Connie was stillborn at 22 weeks gestation on March 25, 2005, as a result of a chromosomal condition she had called Turner's Syndrome, which is often lethal in the womb.

I'll never forget when I visited the hospital to see my mom and Connie. Even at 22 weeks gestation, she was extremely well developed and I'll never forget seeing her little hands and fingernails.

Losing Connie was an extremely harrowing experience for my parents, brothers, sisters, grandparents, and I, and we each mourned this loss in our own way. To this day, I still get sad every March when the anniversary of Connie's death approaches.

In 2005, I lent Connie's story to support a bill, HF 947, which, if enacted, would create an optional record of birth resulting in stillbirth. With my permission, Rep. Pat Garofalo kindly shared Connie's story with fellow legislators, and Governor Pawlenty kindly sent me a personal letter after he signed HF 947 into law.

Today, after much discernment, I decided it was time to share Connie's story again, this time in opposition to HF1/SF1. I know my fellow Minnesotans' views on abortion vary wildly, and that Minnesotans have grown more polarized on this issue since the U.S. Supreme Court handed down the Dobbs decision. I have friends and relatives who have wildly different views on this issue whom I love and respect very much. Abortion is an issue that divides families, divides communities and divides our great state, and I understand why it's such a polarizing and sensitive topic.

HF1/SF1, however, does not even attempt to reflect the complexity of views that citizens of our great state have on the issue of abortion. If enacted, HF1/SF1 would allow abortion at any stage of pregnancy, for any reason, even mere minutes from birth, and would disallow any restrictions, even the requirement that fetal remains be buried or cremated. If this bill were to be enacted, we would treat pets more humanely in this state than we treat unborn children, and I think that should give us all pause.

I think most Minnesotans would agree that unborn children at the same stage of development as Connie should be protected by the laws of our land, and that late term and post-viability abortions should be disallowed in Minnesota. Connie was very much wanted by my family, and so our society considered her to be fully human, yet unborn children at her stage of development and later are destroyed in abortion facilities throughout our great state. It sent shivers up my spine when I realized that for unborn children, they are only considered human if they are wanted, and if they are not wanted, they are treated like paper plates that you can use and throw away if their existence isn't convenient for you. I don't see how that's progressive and I don't see how that advances social justice.

Again, I think a middle ground on this hot button issue that most Minnesotans would agree with is at 22 weeks of gestation or later, the lives of unborn children should be protected by Minnesota law, and that the current law requiring the bodies of all unborn children be buried or cremated and then interred in the ground, which HF1/SF1 would repeal, should remain the law of the land. I urge you, therefore, to oppose and reject HF1/SF 1, or, at the very least, to amend HF1/SF1 to reflect this middle ground position and respect the dignity of unborn children at my sister's age and later and ensure that the bodies of unborn children killed by abortion are treated with the respect and dignity they deserve, and are not treated like medical waste.

Many thanks for your consideration of both Connie's story, and my thoughts related to HF1/SF1. My personal contact info is below and I'd be happy to talk on the phone or correspond with any Minnesota state legislator of any political party who has questions or comments.

Respectfully,

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