Mr. Chairman and members of the Committee,

My name is Steve Calvin. I am a physician who completed a residency in Obstetrics and Gynecology at the University of Minnesota. I am a sub-specialist in maternal-fetal medicine. I am also a Clinical Associate Professor at the University and am co-chair of the Program in Human Rights and Health in the School of Public Health. For 26 years I have served in volunteer roles in research and education at the U of M. I am sorry that I cannot testify in person today but I want to speak in favor of H.F. 2865.

The issue addressed by this bill is vitally important. Based on recent revelations the integrity of the University has come into question and there is a need for the University to rebuild trust with the people of Minnesota. The specifics leading to the need for this bill have been thoroughly described by Representative Whelan and others. The core issue is the University’s failure to adhere to state law by purchasing and doing research on fetal tissue obtained by elective abortion. It is very concerning that these revelations followed an initial denial of the facts by representatives of the University.

Regardless of one’s personal convictions and position on elective abortion there are major legal, ethical and public policy problems with the university’s use of the organs of aborted fetuses in research. One counter argument has been that the benefits of this research far outweigh any other concerns. This is familiar territory. More than a decade ago I was involved in the debate at the University over the use of human embryos for research. At that time the public was told that cures for many diseases required research on human embryos and that cures were only years away. Even if made in good faith those claims were exaggerated and untrue.

Those of us who oppose research on human embryos and the body parts of aborted fetuses are not opposed to science or research. We enthusiastically support the University and its faculty in the excellent research that is done there in an ethical manner. I have personally worked with researchers at the University’s Stem Cell Institute to provide newborn cord blood stem cells for research on its potential for use in repairing damaged heart muscle. This work was published in 2013. The newborn cord blood used for this research was obtained with the informed consent of the mothers.

Minnesotans provide substantial amounts of research funding to the University. They deserve to know that the research is done in a transparent manner with strict adherence to existing law. H.F. 2865 demonstrates a continued commitment to support for the research mission of the University while requiring much needed reforms prior to release of additional research funding. This is an important bill that deserves support.

Sincerely,

Steve Calvin MD

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