

Testimony of Kaye McSpadden, IRCRC
before the Senate Health and Provider Services Committee
February 15, 2006
House Bill 1172

Thank you Madame Chair and Members of the Committee. My name is Kaye McSpadden. I am President of the Indiana Religious Coalition for Reproductive Choice, or IRCRC. The IRCRC is made up of people of all faiths from across the state who support reproductive choice and health and religious freedom. As you might see on my button, our motto is “Pro-Faith, Pro-Family, Pro-Choice.” We are a state affiliate of the national Religious Coalition for Reproductive Choice, a multi-faith organization that has been in existence for over three decades.

I urge you to oppose HB 1172. This bill violates the essential American principle of religious freedom by requiring health professionals to present to their patients a statement that is a religious belief regarding the beginning of life as if it were a fact.

It has been suggested that this phrase is a harmless description of the coming together of two sets of chromosomes as the point at which life begins. The truth is, life doesn't ever begin. Life is a continuum passed down from one generation to the next, Living cells are not created out of anything but other living cells. The phrase “Life begins at conception” (or “human life begins at conception”) is widely understood throughout the general population to mean a human being or a person begins at conception.

The process of reproduction is one of the most wondrous events in all of God's magnificent creation. As we consider how parents of all species pass down the instructions for life and create new offspring, how can we not be filled with a sense of awe and mystery?

We depend upon science to help us learn about the biological processes involved in reproduction. But science cannot answer fundamental philosophical questions, questions that inevitably arise as we think about the continuum of development from conception to birth.

The question of pinpointing that magical moment when a new being is created has been discussed and debated for centuries. At what point does an acorn become an oak tree? At what point does a fertilized chicken egg become a chicken? When does a microscopic fertilized human egg become a new person? And, a question that is important to many people of faith — at what point does that new being have a soul? These are all religious and philosophical questions, and there is a wide diversity of opinion on these questions within the faith community. In the 1973 Roe versus Wade decision, the U.S. Supreme Court recognized this diversity. The Justices decided that it was not up to them to decide when life begins when “those trained in the respective disciplines of medicine, philosophy, and theology are unable to arrive at any consensus.”

Members of our organization include both clergy and laypeople— they are Baptists, United Methodists, Presbyterians, Episcopalians, Christian (Disciples of Christ), Catholics, people of the Jewish faith, and many more. If you are not familiar with the official pro-choice stances of many faith groups, I encourage you to visit the website of the national RCRC at rcrc.org.

Senators, I am not here to dissuade you of whatever personal beliefs you may have on this subject. I respect whatever belief each of you holds in your heart. However, I urge you to recognize that it is, indeed, a religious belief. Please do not impose *your* religious belief on the citizens of Indiana, many of whom have different beliefs. To do so would be to violate our treasured principle of religious freedom. As American citizens, we treasure our individual right to form our own religious beliefs. To help us form those beliefs, we turn to our families, our clergy, and our congregations. In all due respect, we do not need Indiana legislators telling us what to believe.

And in making personal medical decisions, we need accurate, complete, and unbiased information. We depend upon our doctors to provide that information, not legislators.

I urge you to oppose HB 1172.