

Members of the Health and Human Services Committee:

Thank you for the opportunity to speak this morning. I'm sharing today as the mother of a baby girl and as a fierce advocate for her rights and the rights of all lowans to make their own decisions about their bodies. My daughter is just 11 months old, and she exists today because her father and I had access to a wide range of reproductive care, including IVF. I felt powerless at times throughout our experience, unable to start a family on my own timeline. This only reinforced my belief that everyone should have access to the medical care they need in order to stay safe and have a family only if and when they're ready.

My experiences during pregnancy brought a sense of urgency to these beliefs. Pregnancy was an amazing gift for us, but it can be dangerous. No one should be forced to put their body through so many radical changes involuntarily, especially in a system where maternal mortality is a real and disproportionate threat, particularly for black women.

In my own experience, I faced changes that were scary, like heavy bleeding that we mistook for a miscarriage. I faced perpetual discomfort, vomiting multiple times a week for about 7 months straight. I also faced threats we only noticed with a doctor's help, when my blood pressure reached sky-high, dangerous levels. I had no idea until I went in for my routine check-up. All of this was worth it for me, but I can't imagine going through it because I was forced.

At the end of this roller coaster, my daughter was born via emergency c-section roughly 5 weeks after Roe v. Wade was overturned. Leading up to her birth, I was acutely aware that she would be born into a different world than me: one where her ability to take care of her body and make her own decisions would be restricted. At just 7 lbs and 7 oz, it was as if her rights disintegrated as she left my body. It was unreal to think some decision makers in our state would care so deeply about the first several months she grew inside me, but so little about her freedom in the years to come.

With these thoughts in mind, I urge you to vote NO on HSB 255, and to do everything in your power to protect reproductive freedom and access to all reproductive care, including abortion.

Sincerely,

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