

My name is Jessica Roach and I am the executive director of Restoring Our Own Through Transformation. We are a Black Woman led reproductive justice organization dedicated to collectively restoring our well-being through self-determination, collaboration, and resources to meet the needs of women and families within communities. We believe in the ethics of informed consent, as well as autonomy in making decisions, based on the self-evaluation of one's own capacity. HB 214 for me, is the anti-thesis of this.

As a former nurse, I could speak to the various reasons one may choose to termination a pregnancy in which the probability of giving birth to a child with Down's syndrome is high. From concerns of congenital heart defects, to impaired immunity which increases risk of infection, or a host of other possibilities, from a clinical perspective that informs my opinion, all options should be allowed and honored.

As a concerned parent and citizen, the reality of this debate, if you will, is another example of violation of constitutional rights and more importantly, a continued invasion of my reproductive and human right to privacy in decision making regarding what is best for me and my community impacted. For our organization, reproductive justice represents the right to have children, not to have children, and to parent the children in a safe and sustainable environment. HB 214 directly impacts and infringes upon these basic values.

In addition, the continued creation of levels of hierarchy in designating which medical diagnosis is considered of higher value than another is the epitome structural oppression. This is not a right to life debate, this is a right to which life, when, and for how long based upon the subjective reasoning of a select few making the decision without regard for the constituency they are elected to represent. It is politics as usual with little to no regard for personal validity.

Through my lens as a reproductive justice advocate and doula, who values the ability to possess quality of life, it is necessary to center the most important of conversations, which are ours. The right to autonomy and not be governed by an outside entity, to be valid and trusted to make sound and informed decisions, and above all else, make the necessary and difficult decisions. This debate for me, is not one of a pro- life, or pro- choice, strict lens viewed and is being defined by those who do not look like me or live my life experience. This is about the right to have my final word as final, and not a position of debate or argument. We should not be in a place where these discussions are even taking place.

I, again, as with previous testimony and on behalf of our organization oppose HB 214, on the premise that if we are truly to have the ability to be seen in a light of value, that if my life does and will continue to matter, we maintain the few reproductive rights that we have and be the centered voice of the decision making process. As difficult as it seems to be for this legislative body to understand, similar to the discussion of whether or not you want me in your home without invitation, you must validate my body the same. To continue to operate in this vein of invasion is assault, at the very least, oppression as a definite, and violating at its core. If what this assembly stands for is the right to life, it must also consider the stand for actual living entities, those that have additional family members and self, to care

for, that require our health, well-being, and presence in order to accomplish the daily tasks at hand. The only person that is capable of understanding what our true capacity is to do so, are those of us living it, not those looking through the window deciding if what they see inside is worth them breaking into to get.

My demand and plea is to vote no to HB 214 and to allow for us to be trusted in making our own decisions regarding our bodies, our stories, and our choices.

I welcome the opportunity for further discussion, questions, or concerns. Please feel free to contact me at the information provided.

Sincerely,

Jessica M. Roach
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