

March 15, 2011

Washington State Legislature  
Senate Committee Hearing  
March 15, 2011  
**RE: HB 1267**

Dear Senators,

My Name is Maria Lancaster, and I am the Executive Director of Embryo Adoption Services of Cedar Park. We work indirectly and sometimes directly with families and doctors working in the field of assisted reproduction. Our particular service deals with human embryos that have been left remaining after fertility treatments. We are working to assist families that have embryos in the freezer to donate, with families that would like to “adopt” them. We work with families to insure the “best interest” of any born children as our first priority. Families receiving embryos have a home study done by a licensed social worker. Families donating the embryos do so as a “gift” to the receiving family. We are there to help facilitate the family relationships and help them know each other if they desire, because this is in “the best interest of the children” and most of the families involved.

**I am writing to you today to express the grave concerns I have regarding HB 1267, and how it would affect the children.** So you know, I have read the entire bill and listened to the testimony via TVW in the hearing held in the House last January. I am familiar with the intent of HB 1267.

In our service working with human embryos, we work in compliance with the FDA regulations. Embryos are considered “human tissue” in accordance with the FDA. All parties that may be involved in the creation of an embryo have to be tested for infectious diseases just as they would if they were donating another type of body part such as a kidney, bone marrow, or a heart. All of these different kinds of human tissue ***may not be bought or sold.*** To be able to buy or sell body parts would lead to the exploitation of the “seller” and the “buyer”. That is why we don’t have the legalized selling of body parts, or embryos.

Similarly, ***children cannot be bought or sold.*** In WA and every other state, a woman cannot sell her baby to a family wanting to adopt no matter how fit for parenting the two intended parents may be. **There is no balance made between the possible exploitation of child and mother and the desires of the intended parents.** No state has decided that with certain safeguards, baby selling could become an acceptable practice.

Surrogacy in this state is not illegal. It is just **allowed without financial incentives, and it should stay that way.** There are good reasons for this. All of the same reasons we do not pay for or allow for the sale of children or of human body parts, including human embryos.

HB 1267 would make being a surrogate *no longer the willing “donor”* of her services but a paid worker. This creates motives that may **not be in the best interest of the born children** or the surrogates themselves.

HB 1267 is a long and complex bill with far reaching effects that cannot be easily measured until it's too late. **The bill itself has only ONE reference to the “best interest of the child” in all of its 46 pages.** For years the dominant characteristic of a society or a state, the guiding wisdom, has always been “the best interest of the child”. **This bill would make an “about face” and the state would now be operating in the best interest of the “paying customer”. This is NOT acceptable.**

So the vulnerable children and “surrogates” would be the victims of laws that are in direct contradiction with everything we have ever learned or known about adoption, child custody, and matters relating to family law. Until now, we have always operated on the principal that it is the **primary duty of professional and lawmakers to consider the ramifications on children involved and how they will be affected.**

**Another concern is the repeated assertion in the bill that the child will be removed from the surrogate “immediately” after birth. This** consequence of this bill will do nothing for the child. What about the first colostrums milk so vital to the establishment of a healthy immune system? What about the psychological condition of the surrogate who just gave birth? Giving birth is a monumental event in the life of a woman. The wording of the bill makes it certain that the surrogate would have no legal right to even hold the child, even to say good-bye? It's completely heartless to the woman and the child. And this would all be done, complements of the state?

**The bill clearly makes this all about the “rights” of the paying customer, and that's why it's wrong.** It's unconscionable to make state laws, which treat women and children as commodities. Women and children are not inanimate objects. Everything in this bill points to redefining what was considered the decent and fair treatment of vulnerable children. Children are not objects to be used as "property", nor should being paid for something that should be a gift, if it is going to be done at all demean women.

I am frankly shocked we are even considering this bill that has been so plainly crafted to benefit a very small section of society and yet, in doing so, will have a profound impact on every family in this state with the new “parentage” definitions.

**There is nothing moral about the "sale" of certain things in life. Renting a womb for a fee is one of those things.**

Please stand up for the vulnerable. If you won't, who can once this is made into law?

**Please vote no on the passage of HB 1267 out of committee.**

Thank you,

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