



Senate
Iowa Legislature
90th General Assembly
Re: House File 2617

March 26, 2024

Dear Senator,

My name is Bradley N. Kehr, and I serve as Government Affairs Director at Americans United for Life (“AUL”). Established in 1971, AUL is a national law and policy nonprofit organization with a specialization in abortion, end-of-life issues, and bioethics law. AUL publishes pro-life model legislation and policy guides,¹ tracks state bioethics legislation,² and regularly testifies on pro-life legislation in Congress and the states. Our vision at AUL is to strive for a world where everyone is welcomed in life and protected in law. As Government Affairs Director, I specialize in life-related legislation, constitutional law, and abortion jurisprudence.

I write to encourage you to take up and pass House File 2617 (H.F. 2617), which ensures that Iowa public school students are receiving necessary education on human growth and development.

Unfortunately, American children know very little about pregnancy and human development inside of the womb. This is important biological information that children should know, especially with the rates of adolescent pregnancies.³

¹*Pro-Life Model Legislation and Guides*, AMS. UNITED FOR LIFE, <https://aul.org/law-and-policy/> (last visited Feb. 4, 2024). AUL is the original drafter of many of the hundreds of pro-life bills enacted in the States in recent years. See Olga Khazan, *Planning the End of Abortion*, ATLANTIC (July 16, 2020), www.theatlantic.com/politics/archive/2015/07/what-pro-life-activists-really-want/398297/ (“State legislatures have enacted a slew of abortion restrictions in recent years. Americans United for Life wrote most of them.”); see also Anne Ryman & Matt Wynn, *For Anti-Abortion Activists, Success of ‘Heartbeat’ Bills was 10 Years in the Making*, CTR. PUB. INTEGRITY (Jun. 20, 2019), <https://publicintegrity.org/politics/state-politics/copy-paste-legislate/for-anti-abortion-activists-success-of-heartbeat-bills-was-10-years-in-the-making/> (“The USA TODAY/Arizona Republic analysis found Americans United for Life was behind the bulk of the more than 400 copycat [anti-]abortion bills introduced in 41 states.”).

² *Defending Life: State Legislation Tracker*, AMS. UNITED FOR LIFE, <https://aul.org/law-and-policy/state-legislation-tracker/> (last visited Feb. 13, 2024).

³ In 2020, pregnant teenagers between the ages of 15 and 19 gave birth to 158,043 children. *Trends in Teen Pregnancy and Childbearing*, OASH, <https://opa.hhs.gov/adolescent-health/reproductive-health-and-teen-pregnancy/trends-teen-pregnancy-and-childbearing#:~:text=In%202020%2C%20the%20teen%20birth,the%201991%20peak%20of%2061.8.&text=>

It is important to note that H.F. 2617 does not mandate specific teachings on sex, nor does it discuss sex, abortion, or alternatives to abortion. It simply provides students with basic facts about human development in utero. Educating our children on the truth and realities of fetal development in the womb is critical to their decision making both as adolescents and adults. With the advent of the ultrasound, the development of a human child in utero is no longer a mysterious or inaccessible process. Yet, it is unlikely that an individual, especially if they are a teenager or adolescent, will encounter such information until they or their partner have become pregnant, which can be too late in time to gain this knowledge.

The reality is that:

1. A complete, genetically unique (except for monozygotic twins) individual member of the species *homo sapiens* exists at conception;
2. Between five (5) and six (6) weeks' gestation, the preborn human being's heart begins beating;
3. The preborn human being begins to move about in the womb at approximately eight (8) weeks' gestation;
4. At about nine (9) weeks' gestation, all basic physiological functions are present. Teeth and eyes are present, as well as external genitalia;
5. A human being's vital organs begin to function at approximately ten (10) weeks' gestation. Hair, fingernails, and toenails begin to form;
6. At eleven (11) weeks' gestation, the preborn human's diaphragm is developing, and he or she may even hiccup. He or she is beginning to move about freely in the womb;
7. At twelve (12) weeks' gestation, the preborn human being can open and close his or her fingers. He or she starts to make sucking motions, and senses stimulation from the world outside the womb.

These are just some of the amazing developmental stages that human life takes at its earliest forms. H.F. 2617 ensures that both an ultrasound video showing the development of vital organs in early fetal development and a video depicting the development through multiple stages are shown to students, which will illustrate these biological realities.

Ultimately, such education has the potential to do for Iowa's youth what the ultrasound has done for expecting mothers—give a clear and truthful image of the

There%20were%20158%2C043%20births%20to,of%20all%20births%20in%202020, (last visited 3/7/2024); see also Brady E. Hamilton, et al., *NVSS Vital Statistics Rapid Release: Births: Provisional Data for 2022*, CDC (June 2023), <https://www.cdc.gov/nchs/data/vsrr/vsrr028.pdf> (finding that the birth rate for teenagers aged 15 to 19 was 13.5 births per 1,000 females).

child in the womb. This lays the foundation for making informed decisions about whether or not to have a child and how to understand and care for a child should there be one in the womb.

For these reasons, I urge you to take up and pass H.F. 2617.

Respectfully Submitted,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Bradley N. Kehr". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name being the most prominent.

Bradley N. Kehr
Government Affairs Director
Americans United for Life