

Bill that would halt abortions based on Down syndrome one step closer to passing

St. George News

Written by Spencer Ricks

February 28, 2018

<https://www.stgeorgeutah.com/news/archive/2018/02/28/lgl18-srr-bill-that-would-halt-abortion-based-on-down-syndrome-one-step-closer-to-passing/#.WpmuDmaZOi4>

ST. GEORGE — Abortions for unborn children with Down syndrome may soon be illegal in Utah if a controversial bill passes the state Senate and ends up on Gov. Gary Herbert's desk.

Rep. Karianne Lisonbee, R-Clearfield, is sponsoring a bill that would ban doctors from performing abortions on women who are seeking one because their fetuses have been diagnosed with Down syndrome | Legislator profile photo via house.utah.gov, St. George News
The proposed Down Syndrome Nondiscrimination Act, designated HB 205 in the 2018 Legislature, would ban doctors from performing abortions on women who are seeking one because their fetuses have been diagnosed with Down syndrome. The bill passed the House earlier this month, and was just given a favorable recommendation from the Senate Judiciary, Law Enforcement and Criminal Justice Committee, which voted 3-2 in favor of the bill Monday.

The bill now heads to the Utah Senate for consideration, which means the bill is one step closer to becoming a law in Utah.

"Some people say these people need to be aborted," bill sponsor Rep. Karianne Lisonbee, R-Clearfield, told St. George News. "And I have a big problem with that. I see value in every life."

The bill has not been without heavy pushback from members of the community and activist groups. More than 20 people spoke during the Senate committee hearing. Medical professionals expressed opposition to the bill and many warned it could not be impervious to a legal challenge if taken to court.

At the House committee meeting in January, a representative for the American Civil Liberties Union of Utah threatened legal action taken if this bill is passed.

"We believe this bill stands in the way of a woman seeking an abortion while doing nothing to seriously address discrimination against those with disabilities," said Marina Lowe, legislative and policy counsel for the ACLU of Utah. "Make no mistake, there will be legal action here if the state of Utah chooses to go down this path."

But despite abortions being deemed legal after Supreme Court decisions like *Roe v. Wade* and *Planned Parenthood v. Casey*, Lisonbee said she believes her bill would be completely lawful

and would stand up in court if challenged. Lisbonee said abortions for babies with Down syndrome would be considered eugenics.

“These court decisions were never intended to allow eugenics, which is an issue the courts have come down unequivocally opposed to,” Lisbonee said. “This bill asks a new question.”

Similar laws against abortions for fetuses with Down syndrome are already being challenged in courts in Louisiana, Indiana and Ohio.

There is a lot of misinformation about Down syndrome, and it doesn’t have to be scary to have a baby with Down syndrome, Lisbonee said.

“Most people just don’t have the understanding and knowledge about Down syndrome, and so a lot of their reaction is based on fear,” Lisbonee said. “Then the conversation with their doctor immediately proceeds to abortions. We need to change this and offer other options that preserve the lives of these children.”

Email: sricks@stgnews.com

Twitter: [@STGnews](https://twitter.com/STGnews) | [@SpencerRicks](https://twitter.com/SpencerRicks)

Copyright St. George News, SaintGeorgeUtah.com LLC, 2018, all rights reserved.