

## **There is No Denying a Heartbeat**

I believe that life begins at conception. Just because that life has not fully developed, does not mean that it is any less valuable compared to a newborn, a five-year-old, or a seventy-year-old; a life is a life. There is no denying a heartbeat.

However, the argument became more personal to me last summer. I want to be a neonatal nurse, and I love healthcare. So, when I had the opportunity to attend the Kentucky Governor's Scholar program in the summer of 2018, I was ecstatic to hear that my healthcare focus group would be visiting an anatomy lab at the University of Kentucky. What I had learned in my AP Anatomy class jumped off the pages of a textbook into real life, as I was able to examine actual organs and bones. Yet even more interesting to me were tiny babies preserved in glass specimen containers at various gestational ages, one even still in utero.

I was able to observe each baby up close. While it was disconcerting that these babies died before birth, it was fascinating to see the stages of a baby's development during the nine months of pregnancy that is normally hidden from the naked eye. They were small, but there was so much detail in their little bodies. These babies were not "blobs of cells," as some might argue; they had fingers and lips. Some were beginning to grow ears, and others had eyelids. In each stage of growth, it was obvious that I was looking at a human. The reality of life beginning at conception is hard to deny when you see tiny toes with even smaller toenails on miraculously formed miniature bodies.

While I felt strongly against taking pictures of those tiny babies out of reverence for their lost lives, I hope that I will forever remember them. Even though they did not experience birth or take air into their lungs, they are proof of the miracle of life. I was able to point out these facts to other students on our field trip who had different views from my own. I have also shared this

experience with those who ask about my time as a Kentucky Governor's Scholar, and it has given me a platform to share my pro-life thoughts in a gracious manner.

Since I returned home, I have continued to research physical evidence for life at conception as well as each states' current standing on abortion. It remains a growing, controversial topic in the media today, especially after New York passed a late-term abortion law, which allows abortions to be performed after twenty-four weeks of pregnancy. Mississippi Republican Senator Angela Hill summed up my thoughts on the matter when she said, "I see in this country that we protect sea turtle eggs and we protect other endangered species of animals with a greater degree of scrutiny and zealously than we protect a child in the womb."<sup>1</sup> The pro-choice movement focuses its efforts on women's rights, ignoring of the reality that they are removing the voice of an unprotected child.

However, after Iowa passed a heartbeat bill in March of 2018, other states are making efforts to pass similar laws. I was proud to learn that the Kentucky General Assembly will be debating a bill in its 2019 session that could make abortion a Class D felony after the detection of a fetal heartbeat (five to six weeks after conception).<sup>2</sup> I will be watching this legislation closely and speaking out to support it. Florida, Ohio, South Carolina, and Tennessee are also in the process of enacting variations of the heartbeat bill. Within the next decade, the United States could witness the overturn of *Roe vs. Wade*. If this happens, Louisiana and Mississippi, as well as North and South Dakota, are already poised to make abortion automatically illegal.<sup>3</sup>

As these laws are contested and tried through the American judicial system, the stage is being set for the next generation to see the reversal of *Roe vs. Wade*, offering protection and sanctity for all human life. The pending heartbeat laws are beginning to give a voice to the unborn - the future citizens of America. As I begin college to pursue a career in the medical field, I am

eager to learn more about the growth and development of unborn babies. Each embryo carries a valuable human life. As a future American physician, I will fight to protect each precious life, no matter how young, and encourage my colleagues to do the same.

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Reference: 1. "Mississippi advances ban on abortion after fetal heartbeat." AP News, 13 Feb. 2019. <<https://www.apnews.com/e41973cb7e7c4441b77d90e852568401>>.

2. "Kentucky Bill Would Ban Abortion Once Heartbeat is Detected." Glasgow Daily Times, 13 Dec. 2018. <[https://www.glasgowdailytimes.com/news/kentucky-bill-would-ban-abortion-once-heartbeat-is-detected/article\\_52f87a20-ff1c-11e8-ae74-33ec4b8c0613.html](https://www.glasgowdailytimes.com/news/kentucky-bill-would-ban-abortion-once-heartbeat-is-detected/article_52f87a20-ff1c-11e8-ae74-33ec4b8c0613.html)>.

3. "How Difficult Is It To Get An Abortion? Here Are The Laws For Every State." Refinery 29, 16 Jan. 2019. <<https://www.refinery29.com/en-us/2018/05/198385/abortion-laws-in-every-state.>>.

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