

**TESTIMONY OF MISSOURI RIGHT TO LIFE IN SUPPORT OF SB 724
BANNING ABORTIONS BASED SOLELY ON DOWN SYNDROME DIAGNOSIS
January 24, 2018**

First, Missouri Right to Life wants to thank this and past Missouri legislatures for making Missouri one of the most pro-life states in the country. Missouri has led the nation in passing over the years many of the laws that are currently very popular pending legislation in other states. Missouri's respect for life is reflected at its core in its statute declaring, "Life begins at conception." Based on that premise, Missouri law has protected that separate and unique human life in the womb. In fact, Missouri law allows for criminal prosecution on anyone (except in the circumstance of abortion) who kills that life. And just a few years ago, this legislature passed the ban on abortions of viable babies after 20 weeks gestation.

MRL recognizes that every abortion results in 2 distinct, direct victims of abortion: the baby and the mother. Certainly, the victimhood of the baby is without question. A human life is destroyed, usually with the world unaware of the loss of all of the gifts and abilities and benefits to society that would have resulted from that life.

The second victim, the mother, also suffers, sometimes physically and very often emotionally and spiritually. The irony is that the media and popular culture promote abortion as a women's health issue, as if abortion is good for women. They ignore the physical and mental and emotional health risks that are caused by abortion, for example the increased risk of breast cancer, infertility, depression and suicide and numerous others. But Missouri has seen fit to require the abortionists to inform the women of all of these risks and give the women a 72 hour reflection period after receiving this information so that they can truly contemplate the gravity of their decision. And because of the recent work of this legislative body, that information provided to women includes an ultrasound. Also, because of prior legislation, the clinics are required to have a complication plan in place with the Department of Health for chemical abortions in an attempt to insure the mother's health care during an abortion.

Once again, in SB 724, you have an opportunity to protect women's health on the issue of abortion by banning abortions based solely on the diagnosis of Down syndrome. A 2012 academic review of published literature on abortion after a prenatal diagnosis of Down syndrome in the United States found that more than half of preborn children with Down syndrome are aborted. Nine hospital-based studies showed the rate of abortion to be as high as 85% when a preborn child is diagnosed with Down syndrome. Increasing the reporting requirements for abortions on Down syndrome babies would increase our ability to know exactly how many Down syndrome babies are aborted in Missouri.

There are children that suffer with disabilities. While modern medicine is making it easier to detect a baby's disability, these methods are not fool proof. Tim Tebow is living proof. But even if the medical tests are correct in diagnosing a disability, does that justify killing that child? This nation has enacted many laws to prevent discrimination against the disabled and to accommodate them. Why should we not extend those protections to those little lives struggling in the womb? Can you imagine a world without Beethoven, or physicist Stephen Hawking, or baseball pitcher Jim Abbot, or Chris Burke from the television series "Life Goes On" and so many others with disabilities that have contributed so much to society? An extra chromosome should not mean immediate death. There are people waiting to adopt children with Down syndrome. Give that baby a chance. He or she is still a baby.

For all of the foregoing reasons, Missouri Right to Life supports SB 724.