

Testimony Against the Abortion Rights Constitutional Amendment
Pastor Jason Van Bommel, Forest Hill Presbyterian Church
Member, Christians Advocating for Life in Annapolis

Restrictions to lethal force – Should parents have a constitutional right to use lethal force on a child in the womb?

The 10 commandments are foundational in the Judeo-Christian tradition to govern the continuity of societal trust. They clarify rules for right relationship with God and with others and seek to limit practices of the day that are harmful.

Consider what they were intended to promote and protect.

- [Exodus 20:12](#) Honoring Father and Mother and not disrespecting appropriate parental authority (when consistent with the other laws).
- [Exodus 20:13](#) In favor of protecting life, not lethal force ending life.
- [Exodus 20:14](#) In favor of marital faithfulness and chastity not promiscuity. [Matthew 5:27-28](#)
- [Exodus 20:17](#) In favor of contentment and trusting God's care for the essentials, including the reproductive years, rather than operating on perceptions from comparison, envy, selfish ambition, or fear.
- [Exodus 20:15](#) In favor of generously giving of oneself toward the common good, not stealing or forcibly re-appropriating a neighbor's livelihood and finances to oneself. [Ephesians 4:28](#)
- [Exodus 20:16](#) In favor of telling the truth and not stating misleading or false testimony.
- [Exodus 20:3-4](#) Recognizing God as the pre-eminent authority. Not making a god in our image to fit our tastes as though we define his scope of authority in life and he is accommodating to our passions whatever they may be.

In the 10 commandments, honor for parental authority was upheld but constrained by the other 9 laws. Together, they are the biblical foundation of reproductive liberty as set forth by the Creator of life.

The framers of the constitution understood that the more closely we came to these principles the more enduring the social contract and the more lasting the benefit to pass on to future generations. To stray into the prohibitions as a foundation for a social contract is a path to perceptions of injustice, division, and broken social bonds. A house divided against itself cannot stand. Furthermore, Scripture asserts that after death we will all be held accountable to our Creator for our stewardship in these areas. [2 Corinthians 5:10](#)

In the New Testament it is revealed that the intention of the law is to point us to the person of Jesus. We have all broken these laws in the course of our lives. Christ's flawless life was offered as payment for the penalty of our brokenness. [Romans 3:5](#). This is the message of salvation that has been the crux of the Christian faith for millennia. Jesus stated, "If you hold to my teaching, you are really my disciples. Then you will know the

truth, and the truth will set you free.” [John 8:31-32](#).

Should then lethal force that harms at least one vulnerable life and potentially two lives not have strict oversight by the state? With public health mandates like seatbelts, smoking regulations, and other government measures that feel restrictive to public freedoms, policy makers recognized there is a balance to strike. Laws must restrict certain freedoms in order to protect the lives and well-being of human beings.

But are pre-born humans persons deserving protection from the law?

As a pastor, I am trained in understanding and teaching the Bible. The prophet Jeremiah was told by the Lord, “*Before I formed you in the womb, I knew you.*” In Psalm 139, King David praised God by saying, “*You knit me together in my mother’s womb.*” Luke 1 tells us of the first meeting between Elizabeth and Mary, the mother of Jesus, when Elizabeth was about 7 months pregnant with John the Baptist and Mary was newly pregnant with Jesus. Elizabeth greeted Mary, “*Blessed are you among women, and blessed is the fruit of your womb! And why is this granted to me that the mother of my Lord should come to me? For behold, when the sound of your greeting came to my ears, the baby in my womb leaped for joy.*”

As a pastor, it is clear to me that the Bible upholds the full personhood of preborn human beings.

Now, it would be appropriate for those who support abortion rights to object that we do not base our laws on the Bible. I agree. As a pluralistic society that believes in the separation of church and state, we don’t. But the Bible is not the only voice that affirms the full human personhood of pre-born human beings. So do our culture and our civil laws in the State of Maryland, at least when it comes to **wanted** pre-born babies.

An expectant mother looks forward to sonograms so she can see her baby. She is keenly aware in the third trimester that another human being with a mind and will all her own is living in her womb. Throughout her pregnancy, she actively seeks to care for and protect her baby with a proper diet, prenatal vitamins, and careful living.

Maryland state law provides protection for wanted preborn children from violent assault and from medical malpractice. Someone who commits violence leading to the death of a preborn child can be charged with homicide. Doctors are required to provide excellent care for the preborn baby as well as her mom.

It is only the **unwanted** preborn children who are afforded no such legal protections, and now some seek to enshrine this sad injustice in our state’s Constitution, seeking to declare that one person has the absolute Constitutional right to determine the personhood of another human being.

In 1857, it was a Marylander, Chief Justice Roger B Taney, who issued the most morally outrageous decision in the history of the Supreme Court (*Dred Scott v Sanford*) when he gave one class of people – slaveholders – the right to strip personhood rights from another. In the

years since then, we have slowly but steadily and rightly expanded legal personhood and equal protections to more Americans and more Marylanders.

Don't take this egregious step backward in the expansion of human rights. Don't permanently enshrine in our Constitution the most serious injustice against the most vulnerable Marylanders, unwanted pre-born children. They are precious little vulnerable people. It is your obligation to protect them from harm.