

March 5, 2024

Dear Members of the Health and Government Operations Committee,

My testimony is in support of HB1422. There are well-established discrimination laws against basic, innate individual traits such as race, gender, and religion. Gene integrity is not an exception. Imposing a procedure which can artificially cause such a deep level of constitutional change is discrimination against the right of individuals to preserve their genetic integrity.

Another aspect is the inherent risks of a genetic procedure. Technology in the field of genetics is developing at a fast pace and comes with great unknowns and serious potential risks, which are usually not detected in short clinical trials and take years to detect. Not assessing risks comprehensively is not an implication of the absence of such risks. For example, the following is an excerpt from a New York Times article on CRISPR, gene editing technology. Crispr-Cas9 "can cause serious side effects in the cells of human embryos, prompting them to discard large chunks of their genetic material, a new study has found." "The consequences of these errors can be quite serious in some cases, said Dieter Egli, a geneticist at Columbia University and an author of the study." "We are often used to hearing about papers where Crispr is very successful," said Nicole Kaplan, a geneticist at New York University who was not involved in the study. "But with the amount of power we hold' with this tool, Dr. Kaplan said, it is crucial 'to understand consequences we didn't intend.'" This exemplifies why the application of a genetic procedure should be an informed choice without penalization or discrimination for declining. No genetic procedure should be a condition for education, work, or access to daily life activities.

Throughout history, medical products have been taken off the market or warnings have been placed after years of harm to many. Oftentimes, trusting individuals are left incapacitated, unable to have a functional life, and with great suffering and financial burden. Unfortunately, these cases are not anecdotal.

The majority of children and adults have chronic conditions. Therefore, more than ever, a bill like HB1422 is needed to protect an already susceptible population from further harm.

Sincerely,

Alejandra Lorenzo-Chang

Maryland resident

malorenzochang@hotmail.com

References

New York Times article

<https://www.nytimes.com/2020/10/31/health/crispr-genetics-embryos.html>

Study

[https://www.cell.com/cell/fulltext/S0092-8674\(20\)31389-1](https://www.cell.com/cell/fulltext/S0092-8674(20)31389-1)