

**Testimony to Washington, D.C. City Council Members
Bill 20-32 Surrogacy Parenting Agreement Act of 2013
Kathleen Sloan
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My name is Kathleen Sloan and I am a member of the board of directors of the National Organization for Women (NOW), the largest feminist activist organization in the United States. For the last six years, I have worked on issues related to third party reproduction. As Program Director of the Council for Responsible Genetics, I developed extensive programming in the area of women and biotechnology. I am co-author of an international feminist call for a UN Declaration on Global Reproductive Trafficking and its Violations of Women's Human Rights. I have written extensively and traveled around the country, speaking at the U.S. Capitol, state legislatures and universities against exploitation and commodification of women through commercial surrogacy and egg trafficking.

I have come here to testify against Bill 20-32 because it would legalize the commodification of women. I urge you to oppose this legislation because surrogacy not only commodifies and exploits women but poses serious risks to their health.

In order to gestate a child, a woman must undergo multiple injections of carcinogenic synthetic hormones and drugs such as Lupron which is *not* FDA approved for fertility use, along with surgery for embryonic implantation, all of which can have devastating short and long term health consequences. Two of the most serious long-term risks are future infertility and cancers, most commonly ovarian, breast and endometrial.

Given these risks, it is scandalous, not to mention grossly unethical that women contemplating selling their bodies are not provided with relevant information before they give their consent. They are not told that no long term studies have been conducted on the health risks involved. Many, if not most, are not aware that there is virtually no regulation of surrogacy or egg trafficking in the United States; no national registry to provide a centralized repository for records, patient follow-up, and long term studies; that the commercial fertility industry has every reason to minimize the health, legal and economic risks given the enormous profits generated.

Legislators have the opportunity and responsibility to stop the epidemic of commodifying women into objects for sale. Women are universally sexually commodified and surrogacy is yet another form of objectification, a means to a desired end for the benefit and profit of others. It would be a sad day for the nation's capital city should it vote to join the merchants of shame who traffic in women's reproductive capacities by passing a law that turns financially vulnerable women into breeders for the wealthy through commercial surrogacy.

As an advocate for women's equal rights and justice, I must speak out for the voiceless women in your city who will be lured by the siren's song of an economic quick fix,

seduced by a predatory industry's manipulation of their altruistic instincts, and kept ignorant of the risks to their health, into commercial contracts that deny their very humanity.

This country prides itself on being a beacon to other nations. Yet among other developed countries, particularly those in Europe whose emigrants founded the United States, surrogacy is illegal and considered an extreme form of exploitation of women. The U.S. holds the dubious "distinction" of being second only to India world-wide in the supply of surrogates. Have we allowed the worship of profit-driven unregulated private business and facilitation of a selfish entitlement mentality to turn women into machine-like breeders, "ovens" as the author of a surrogacy bill in Louisiana calls them? Is this the image the nation's capital wishes to project to the world? If so, it is a tragic reflection of the "values" of the city you represent to the country and to the world.

For millennia, women's human rights have been abused and ignored with impunity. As developments in biotechnology facilitate the commodification of reproduction, alarm bells should be sounding about the *new* door that has been opened for yet further disregard of women's humanity, wholeness, physical, emotional and spiritual inviolability. If you care about women, their health, and their rights as equal human beings, you must not support their exploitation as disposable commodities.