

...for a *human* future.

June 5, 2013

Hon. Bobby Jindal
Office of the Governor, State of Louisiana
PO Box 94004
Baton Rouge, LA 70804-9004

Dear Governor Jindal,

I am writing to urge you to veto Senate Bill 162. For more than a decade I have written, testified, spoken, and made documentary films in the area of assisted reproductive technologies (ART). While extremely sympathetic to the desires of infertile couples to have children, I am deeply concerned with how little focus is placed on the children created via ART and on the women often needed to supply eggs and wombs. I was a pediatric nurse for over two decades. In that field, a priority is given to the maternal-child bond. The most natural environment for the child, his or her mother's womb, is of utmost importance to the physical and emotional development and well-being of a child. With each year, we learn more about the womb and about the life-long connection between mother and child. The whole new field of epigenetics proves that this nine-month time in the womb plays an important part on the child's later health, sense of identity, and connection. I strongly disagree with Senator Smith's, the author of SB 162, analysis that the woman's womb is just like an oven. There are many things happening *in utero* which cannot be casually and disrespectfully dismissed.

Surrogacy intentionally sets up a negative environment. Instead of encouraging women to bond with their child *in utero*, surrogacy demands that she **not** bond with this child. I have interviewed many women who were surrogates who very much regret their decision. Surrogacy is harmful to both the woman who carries the child and to the child she carries.

The health risks to the woman, who must take powerful hormones to prepare her body to accept an embryo, are real and serious. Women who decide to become surrogates are often motivated by the financial gains they are offered. SB 162 requires that the surrogate mother has already had children, but no one has done any sociological studies on the children in such homes, who observe their mothers keeping some of the babies and giving others away. Living expenses can be an enticement for a woman of low-income with children in the home. Surrogacy takes something as natural as a pregnant woman nurturing her unborn child, and turns it into an unnatural contractual, commercialized endeavor.

Your family came from India, which now has more surrogate pregnancies than anywhere else. The United States is second to India in number of surrogate pregnancies, and is often referred to as the Wild, Wild West of ART. Only now, after many abuses—and a surrogate woman's death—has India begun tightening up their laws. Please veto this bill and keep commercial surrogacy illegal. Louisiana should not become the new India.

Sincerely,

Jennifer Lahl
President, The Center for Bioethics and Culture Network

