

Representative Susan Donovan
Chair, House Health and Human Services Committee
Rhode Island House of Representatives, Rhode Island Statehouse
82 Smith Street
Providence, Rhode Island

RE: EMBRYO SAFETY AND STORAGE, RI #5177

Dear Chairwoman Donovan,

My name is Barry Prizant, Ph.D. I am speech and language pathologist in private practice, and an Adjunct Professor of Communicative Disorders, University of Rhode Island.

I wish to testify in favor of this proposed legislation. My wife and I have personally experienced a great deal of stress and personal challenge over many years as two of our frozen embryos were lost at Women and Infants Hospital more than 20 years ago. Despite the fact of knowing the embryos were missing, as documented in the IVF clinic notes, Women and Infants' never contacted us about that, and 10 years later, when they were found, we were never notified of that. Apparently, no procedures for follow-up and patient communication were in place to find the missing embryos, nor to inform us of their current status. We only discovered that they still existed when we received two "Dear Patient" invoices in the summer of 2017 requiring us to pay for storage of the embryos that we thought and were told no longer existed. If the bill was not paid, they would be considered abandoned and discarded. Even after the hospital acknowledged that indeed, they had our embryos, and after we met with the IVF director and IVF laboratory staff, they promised to follow-up with us to help resolve this tragic sequence of events, but never did. I have since come to learn that what we experienced is because there's virtually no oversight, regulation and accountability regarding IVF procedures, storage and safety of embryos.

Personally, this experience has been traumatic, both for my wife and myself, due to all the challenge and struggle of multiple miscarriages, the difficult and painful medical procedures required for IVF, and the inexhaustible number of hospital and clinic visits (most often to receive news of another failed attempt at pregnancy). Our experience has been an emotional roller coaster, with all the overwhelming feelings of grief, loss and disbelief, which were reignited when we learned our embryos had been lost, but still existed. With appropriate regulation and oversight, this could have been avoided. My hope is that this legislation will go a long way in requiring IVF clinics to improve quality of services in supporting and reassuring families through this challenging process of IVF, at an extremely vulnerable time for parents and families.

Sincerely,



Barry M. Prizant, Ph.D., CCC-SLP, Adjunct Professor
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