

Testimony of Margaret Kramar Against SCR 1613 and HCR 5019

January 21, 2020

The question of when life begins is not a medical question, but a religious matter. Although medical science can tell us when the heart starts beating in a developing embryo, it cannot answer theological questions such as when the soul enters the body. When does the soul enter the body?

At the time of Aristotle, it was believed that the soul enters the body 40 days after conception in male embryos, and 90 days for female embryos. St. Thomas of Aquinas in *Summa Theologica* stated that the embryo first possessed a vegetative soul, later acquired an animal soul, and after 40 days, a rational soul. In Judaism, the latter half of the Second Temple period saw increasing acceptance of the belief that the soul enters the body at birth and leaves it at death.

The point is that throughout history, other cultures and various religions have had differing opinions on religious questions such as when the soul enters the body.

One of the best bumper stickers I ever saw stated, “Against abortion? Don’t have one.” You may believe passionately that abortion is murder from the moment of conception, and due to the separation of church and state, you have a right to that belief and your views should be respected. But could you please acknowledge that not everyone shares that religious belief, and due to the First Amendment, you have no right to force your religious beliefs on others who do not believe as you do?

What if the tables were turned? What if five, ten, or fifteen years from now, due to climate change catastrophe, the state or federal government decided the world could not support more people and women were forced to get abortions, as happened in China? If that were the law, how would you feel about the government dictating your reproductive decisions?

The Founding Fathers were wise to separate church and state in the First Amendment. Please respect the Constitution.