

Hearing Testimony for Senate Bill 398

My name is Anna Anderson. I am the Executive Director of the Care Net Pregnancy Center of Green County in Monroe, WI. I am here today to testify in opposition of Senate Bill 398. I would like to share with you stories of men and women who come to our center seeking relief from psychological distress they experience after making an abortion decision as well as some statistics associated with our post-abortion healing program.

A 15 y/o girl who had an abortion six months earlier at the age of 14 came to the Center begging us to help her stop the nightmares she had been having since her abortion. She told us she had not had a full night's sleep since her abortion because of horrific nightmares about dead babies. She had insomnia because she feared falling asleep and those nightmares returning. She also reported feelings of extreme guilt, anger and rage. She experienced flashbacks to the abortion procedure. She was depressed and her self-esteem was at an all time low.

Recently, I met with a 22y/o woman who stated she is not "worthy" of anything good because she "chose to take the life" of her child. She reported excessive crying, anger and rage toward her boyfriend and herself, and an inability to make decisions. Relationships with family members were becoming strained because she was withdrawing.

A woman in her 70s told me she cannot get the images of that day decades ago at the abortion facility out of her mind. She described in great detail every aspect of her abortion experience from the moment she drove into the parking lot. She still sees the faces of everyone she encountered that day. She told me these vivid images are always with her and she can't make them stop.

The father of a 17y/o girl came to the Center very distraught and pleaded with us to help his daughter in anyway possible so she would have the means and courage to stand up to those who were trying to force her into an abortion. He told us not a day goes by that he does not think of the abortion he paid for when he was in college. He agonizes daily over his decision to pay to end the life of his first son or daughter. He said it was his agony over this decision that led him to try to drown out his emotions with alcohol and eventually drugs. He did not want his daughter to go through what he described as the "emotional hell" that he had been experiencing for more than 20 years.

Then there were the never-to-be grandparents who came to us for help because they made the choice for their teenaged daughter to have an abortion. As a result of their decision, they will never be grandparents of biological offspring because their only child's fallopian tubes were damaged beyond repair during the abortion procedure. They struggle with tremendous guilt.

These are just a few of the stories we hear from post-abortive men, women and families. There are lifelong consequences to the choice of abortion that affect marriages, parenting, friendships, and other relationships for decades. These consequences can be both physical and psychological.

When women and men come to us for help with their post-abortion stress, we ask them to outline the physical and psychological impact of their abortion experience and why they

came to us for help. These personal accounts from our post-abortive men and women tell us that they believe the following things resulted from their abortion decisions:

- 54 % sought professional counseling to help them alleviate the psychological and emotional distress they felt after their abortion experience;
- 38 % engaged in self-destructive behaviors;
- 29 % report being uncomfortable around children after their abortion;
- 15 % report undue anger towards children;
- 58 % say they are very overprotective of their subsequent children;
- 62 % report having difficulty with relationships;
- 46 % report avoiding relationships with the opposite sex;
- 33 % report becoming too dependent in the relationship;
- 82 % report problems with intimacy since the abortion;
- 90 % of the people who were single at the time of the abortion say their relationship with their significant other ended after the abortion; and
- 64 % of all relationships ended after the abortion when combining married and single couples.

Some of the medical complications reported by our clients as a result of an abortion procedure include:

- 15 % report hemorrhaging excessively and/or for extended periods of time;
- 8 % experienced infections and/or high fevers;
- 46 % report intense pain;
- 8 % had an incomplete abortion;
- 8 % had a perforated uterus;
- 8 % had other uterine complications;
- 15 % had to have hysterectomies;
- 8 % became anemic;
- 15 % report infertility following their abortion;
- 15 % of the women report menstrual disorders;
- 15 % report tubal pregnancies;
- 23 % experienced miscarriages;
- 8 % have a scarred uterus;
- 8 % experience headaches; and
- 8 % have Pelvic Inflammatory Disease.

In addition, the post-abortive men and women who come to us for help report the following psychological complications that they associate with their abortion decision:

- 79 % report guilt over their decision;
- 64 % report anger and rage;
- 29 % experience flashbacks;
- 64 % experience feelings of helplessness;
- 29 % have sexual disorders;
- 14 % report a hatred of the opposite sex;
- 21 % have eating disorders;
- 79 % report not being able to forgive themselves;
- 14 % report an inability to bond with their living children;
- 7 % say they had difficulty making decisions after their abortion;
- 64 % experience grief;
- 29 % experience nightmares;

- 29 % became suicidal after their abortion;
- 57 % report feelings of despair;
- 29 % fear future pregnancies;
- 64 % turn to alcohol and/or drugs to alleviate their emotional pain;
- 38 % report marital problems associated with the abortion;
- 7 % report compulsive behaviors;
- 50 % say they have a tendency to over-react toward their living children;
- 64 % report bonding issues since the abortion;
- 86 % experience depression;
- 38 % become passive-aggressive in their relationships;
- 64 % report excessive crying;
- 71 % report a mistrust of others;
- 86 % have lower self esteem as a result of their abortion decision;
- 64 % report increased stress;
- 100% of those responding say they experienced some degree of withdrawal;
- 80 % say they became sexually promiscuous after their abortion; and
- 40 % report feeling powerless.

With the exception of one teen who came in six months after her abortion, the women and men we have seen at our center for post abortion healing suffered with these psychological and emotional complications for years before seeking help. 64% waited 7-9 years before seeking help. Others waited more than 30 years before seeking help.

When we ask why they finally seek help for what they believe to be the psychological and emotional consequences of their abortion decisions, couples and individuals make comments such as the following:

- “So it can help me through my problems of anger, guilt, flashbacks, and nightmares. I want to be able to sleep. I don’t want to be depressed any more. I want to be able to forgive myself and regain my self esteem.”
- “Because it was bothering me so much I couldn’t function. I knew I had to talk to someone and get help to deal with it.”
- “To save my marriage.”
- “Because I was completely, emotionally exhausted and had no other resource to save our marriage and family. I was at wit’s end.”

Abortion not only hurts the man and woman involved in the abortion decision but everyone in their lives is affected by this because of the emotional baggage that accompanies such a decision. When we consider that at least 1 in 4 women (and some estimate 1 in 3) has had an abortion, the ramifications of this psychological distress are far-reaching and can impact generations.

In conclusion, I would encourage you to carefully consider how abortion hurts men, women and families. After this careful consideration, I would respectfully request that you vote against Senate Bill 398. Thank you.