

***Hello my name is Joann Jones Holden and I am here to testify in opposition to Senate Bill 398***

It will be 24 years ago this October (1984). Life was good, I was dating someone that I loved; I had a loving supportive family and a decent job. I had been raised in church and thought I had a pretty secure grasp on right and wrong. Though now looking back I realize that a lot of those lines of right and wrong were blurred through years of sexual abuse. All of which had left me with a bit of a void spiritually. I see now that I was searching for love and finding it in all the wrong places.

After dating a few months I found I was pregnant. I went to him and received what I have now learned is a pretty common response from a 20 year old man....He asked me if it was his. I told him it was and was hurt and angry that he could have thought otherwise and didn't see him again for a few days. During that time I talked with my sister who believe or not had just found out that SHE was pregnant also, her proposed solution to my situation seemed reasonable. It was one that I knew a number of young women in my high school class had also seen as the answer to their problem of pregnancy. **AN ABORTion** There was a very active Planned Parenthood in Wild Rose which is where my mother worked. In high school we used to be proud of the fact that we only lost one girl out of our graduating class to teenage pregnancy but we lost 5 babies to abortion maybe more out of a town of a little over 700 people and a graduating class of 59 less than half were girl and 5 had had abortions before graduation those are not great odds if you are a baby. Within 24 hours I had an offer to pay and an appointment made and found myself in the abortion clinic in Appleton. The day was cold and rainy I remember nothing about the ride to or from the clinic. I do remember vividly being ushered into the clinic by someone on the staff from the clinic and taken into a very small and sterile room where I was handed a paper to sign and a pamphlet explaining the procedure and told to take off my clothes and put on a gown and someone would be back to get me. I never read the pamphlet or even opened it to be honest. I put it in my purse and waited. I was taken to another office and laid on an exam table like those in a gynecologist office with stirrups my feet were placed into the stirrups and a paper gown draped across my legs. People spoke

among themselves obviously forgetting I was in the room. Across the room a man entered gowned up with a mask on and never spoke a word. He took his place on a stool at the end of the exam table, I heard the suction machine start, and before I knew it I was back home bleeding and crying and feeling like possibly the **WORST** person in the world. I was cramping and bleeding so bad I was forced to call in to work and tell them I wouldn't be there that evening. And then something very unexpected happened, I got into the shower hoping to find some relief from the pain , I was bleeding so profusely that being in the shower didn't slow the flow and I looked down at the bloody water collecting in the tub to find the mass of tissue which I call my baby.

The next six months were what I affectionately refer to as an **Alcoholic Blur**...I don't have any memory of what went on during that time except that I was drunk. It all came to a head by my threatening suicide and my family taking me and having me admitted on the **Psyche** floor of Theda Clark and keeping me there for the next two weeks for **AODA** counseling and drying out. But God in his awesome infinite wisdom and grace had a bigger plan. He was just keeping me safe while my sisters baby was born. He knew exactly what I could and couldn't deal with at that point and kept me in a safe place for that birth. But not adequately dealing with the pain of that birth was just the beginning of not dealing with the pain of the abortion that has lasted now some 20 plus years. This has taken me through endless counseling sessions and bouts of antidepressants and a couple bad marriages and an endless sea of **BAD** decisions, looking to fill that void that was left. Within a year of that abortion I found myself intentionally getting pregnant again. My atonement Child. That child gave me reason to live and got me through some of the toughest years of my life.

This brings me up to almost 10 years ago when I found myself searching for more meaning in my life. God put me in a **VERY** safe place when the next trauma happened. My nephew who I had been there to help raise and was extremely close to, committed suicide. His death alone was incredibly hard to deal with I couldn't make sense of it and I was angry and hurt and grieving and trying to make sense of a senseless situation and on top of that grief I spoke to his girlfriend at the funeral and she said that he did this because she had had an abortion a few weeks earlier and hadn't told him about it until after the fact.

***Abortion has now cost my family 3 lives.***

I was devastated. But truly I didn't understand why I was so upset. MY abortion had been years ago. Could this be after math of that decision made all those years ago? I now know that women who suffer from Post Abortive Syndrome frequently will grieve that loss again and again through out life when she experiences any new loss. Which was confirmed when I lost my mother this past spring.

Through a group called Rachels Vineyard I was able to begin my healing from this atrocity you refer to as choice. I was able to begin to grieve the loss of my child and then be forgiven for the murder I had committed. I could finally release the anger and guilt , remorse and bitterness....which taken over my life.

I guess in summation...i didn't believe that this had been a problem for me. The shame and guilt kept me from seeing the true pain. None of the counselors ever mentioned it was an issue. No doctors said it might be part of the problem and seriously it was just a procedure no reason to grieve. There are millions of women (and men)(they feel that loss too) that are struggling with this same issue. It was so prevalent in the lives of my self and my friends growing up in a town the size of Wild Rose you know it has touched almost everyone in some way. But seldom do people realize what it is that they ~~ave~~ done until they come to hæ this relationship with the Lord and know the price he paid with his life. Are we able to put a price tag on the life that we took?

In prayer 3 plus years ago now a piece of scripture was revealed to me It is.... ***Proverbs 31:8 Speak up for those who cannot speak for themselves; ensure justice for those who are perishing.*** I wasn't sure how to do this but knew in my heart that what I needed to do. AS it turns out seems that it is here today testifying to you in this room and marching for life in Washington DC and speaking for pro life groups through out the state. Through Wisconsin Right to Life and Silent No More, the I am speaking the truth of my ordeal and using that to touch the lives of other that have also been scarred by the lies of the abortionist Through the group called Silent No More and Wisconsin Right to Life I have been given a voice to tell people about abortion and to let people know that abortion hurts women.