

My name is Karen Mahoney and I am testifying in opposition of Senate Bill 398.

Twenty-eight years ago my left hand clutched a wad of wrinkled money as I entered a Milwaukee Abortion Clinic—the cash was the only act of support that my then boyfriend could muster.

The hasty nurse emphasized that the procedure only took a few minutes and wouldn't hurt. As I began to cry, she reassured me that I was 'really lucky' because I was catching it early as there was no baby yet—just a mass of tissue.

Hypnotized by the lights, the dirty carpet and the rows of empty faced women awaiting their turn, I passed the time looking at booklets given to me by the receptionist, describing minimal side effects and rare long-term health risks. The booklets told me not to feel guilty because many women have had multiple abortions—most are risk free and the women go on to live healthy normal lives.

I was given a number for privacy, #187 and when it was called, I walked to the closet draped with an orange flowered curtain. I put on blue paper slippers, a thin grey and white gown and walked to the procedure room.

The nurse tried to make me laugh by telling me that I would be able to keep my thin shape and not have the stretch marks associated with a pregnancy. I began to feel very sad, but didn't recall anything in the booklets mentioning sadness. She told me not to cry because I would feel better once it was over—everyone does, she said.

Legs in the stirrups, the vacuum machine whirred as the doctor inserted the long tube into my vagina. A moderate amount of cramping accompanied me as I watched the jar fill with blood, water and chunks of tissue. I felt sheer horror, as I knew for the first time what I had really done. Nothing that the nurse or doctor said at that point could convince me otherwise. I had authorized the killing of my own baby.

The days that followed were a blur of numbness and despair. I cried constantly, but kept my feelings secret. No one except my boyfriend knew that I had done this, and he didn't seem to care. No one helped me. No one understood—I felt so alone.

For years, I eked my way through life. My faith nearly destroyed, I settled into a bad marriage that ended in divorce 18 years later. The birth of each of my five children, while wonderful, served to solidify in my heart what I had done. I allowed my first child to be murdered and I couldn't keep that silent any longer.

Finally, I began to search out help and begin to recover—I am not there yet, and I don't know that I will ever be because there is nothing that will undo the abortion. What I can do is to urge each one of you to prevent this tragedy from happening to any other baby or young mother in this state. Please, we give our animals more respect than we do human beings. Please vote against Senate Bill 398 and vote to save 940.04. Thank you.