

27 February 2008

To the members of the legislature, and to all here present:

My name is Lena G. Wood, and I am in strong opposition to SB 398.

I am giving testimony today because of my own experience with abortion.

In 1995, when I was nineteen years old, I was living with a boyfriend. I became pregnant very early into our relationship. When I told him I was pregnant, he made it clear that he didn't want any children. I was afraid of losing him, and I felt like I didn't have any other choice but to have an abortion.

I went to a local Planned Parenthood office for help. Only now am I aware that in their "counseling" of me, they side-stepped their legal obligation to inform me of both the dangerous side-effects of having an abortion and my alternatives to having an abortion. In fact, there was no counseling. The only option they spoke of was making an appointment to abort the pregnancy, which they strongly urged me to do.

On the day of my abortion, I felt numb and disconnected as I sat in the waiting room. This all seemed like a bad dream. I was so afraid, but I didn't know what else I could do. I was going through with this because I didn't feel I had any other choice.

The abortion was cold and quick. The abortionist and his assistant used a machine that made a loud sound. I felt sharp pain. I remember feeling like I was on an assembly line.

The next thing I remember, I was being taken to another room with many reclining chairs. I was given some strong drugs and told to sit and rest for a while. They also gave me something small to eat.

I noticed that I was among other women in the same room. There was a very awkward silence, because we all knew what had just happened to each of us.

I remember feeling horrible immediately. The pain was in my lower body, and it was very intense. A short while later, I was escorted to the back door which led to the parking lot, and I left.

My health got worse and worse from that day. For almost the entire week following, I was running a serious fever of nearly 105 degrees. I called Planned Parenthood to let them know of my condition, and to ask for help and advice. Their response was that I had the flu, and that I should take

Tylenol.

A friend took notice of my condition, and, thanks to her persistence, she finally persuaded me to go to a walk-in clinic with her. She was sure there was something really wrong with me. At the clinic, there was panic, and I was immediately taken to the hospital.

Eight days after having my abortion, I was admitted to the hospital and put in the intensive care unit. During my first two days there, I worsened, despite broad spectrum I.V. antibiotics. My family was told that I could die.

My body was shutting down, due to major infection from septic abortion, caused by the failure of the abortionist to remove all of the remains of my child from my uterus. I also had acute pyelonephritis, sepsis, pneumonia, and presumed congestive heart failure. I was attached to a heart machine, and I had a tube in my throat so I could breathe.

Because my condition was not improving, I had to have emergency surgery in the middle of the night. My body was so swollen, I was told that I looked like I was nine months pregnant. During my emergency surgery, 300 cc of bloody peritoneal fluid was removed from my body.

Things seemed to get better after several weeks in the ICU, and I was relocated to recovery. However, I became ill with pancreatitis from an antibiotic I was given during recovery. Thankfully, I survived, continued on with my life, and tried to put the whole thing behind me.

There is one more thing I need to point out about my experience. I never received a hospital bill, and neither did my family, my boyfriend, or anyone else I knew. I believe Planned Parenthood settled my hospital bills quietly, without my knowledge. This was done, perhaps, to cover up their almost-deadly mistake.

Even though I made it through the immediate physical consequences, the worst was yet to come. I dived deep into drug and alcohol abuse, and I was severely depressed. The relationship I had with my boyfriend continued for a time, and we were verbally and physically abusive with each other.

I remember a specific night over a year later when, in a drugged state of mind, I climbed onto the roof of my apartment building, and cried out in anger to God. I said something like "Oh God, if you are real, tell me, Why am I alive? What is the purpose of my life? Why am I here?" I almost jumped off the roof that night to attempt to end my life.

However, I never made that terrible mistake, and I'm glad I didn't. Since that day, I have experienced healing, both in my faith and through acknowledging and naming my child. His name is Stephen Gregory, and I stand here today in his honor.

Even with the healing I have experienced, I still feel the effects in my daily life, and I will, to some extent, until my dying day.

My story is a microcosm of what thousands of others have also experienced through abortion. There is much evidence today, showing that, like me:

~Women who experience abortion are more likely to:
--abuse drugs and alcohol,
--have emotional and psychological problems, and
--struggle with feelings of guilt, hopelessness, and temptations to commit suicide.

In addition, these women are also more likely to have repeated abortions, continuing the cycle. Thankfully, this was not my experience.

Also, statistically, because of my one abortion, I have a much greater risk of developing breast cancer. Those women who have more than one abortion have an even higher risk than I do.

Aside from these facts, abortion providers are among the least regulated in the medical field. As in my case, a woman's right to know all her options is often side-stepped.

Abortion hurts women. It is never in a woman's best interest to have an abortion. Never.

To the members of the legislature, I encourage you: Vote against SB 398! Save Statute 940.04!

Thank you all for listening to my testimony.