

My name is Jennifer Hennes. I have been a resident of Jackson, Wisconsin for 16 years. I am here today to testify in support of AB 427 and share my story regarding how I felt pressured into having an abortion.

I became pregnant at the age of 17. I was not married or in any long term relationship. I was not sure of my options or if I had any. I didn't tell anyone because I didn't know who to tell. When I told who I thought the father was, he blew me off telling me that my pregnancy did not fit into his plans and neither did he have any money to help me. He did however feel it was in his best interest to let everyone else know of my pregnancy.

When my family heard of my pregnancy, my sister came to my apartment door. I did not answer, yet stood on the other side of the closed door. As she spoke through the door she notified me that my parents wanted me to go away and have an abortion so I wouldn't bring shame to our family. She told me that she would take me somewhere so my parents wouldn't be involved. I stood silently listening as someone else determined the fate of my son. Finally, I agreed that I should at least go and have a pregnancy test to confirm what I already knew in my heart.

I remember sitting across from a woman at a desk at Planned Parenthood. She told me how far along I was. When I tried to tell her that had to be impossible she cut me off. She made me think that there was no way I could know, because she was the professional and I was a stupid 17 year old kid. I really didn't get a chance to say anything. She informed me that I should wait until I turned 18 so not to involve my parents and then come in. According to what I had been told by the "professional" I would have been about 12 weeks along at the time of the procedure. I wasn't given much information in regards to the course of action.

After my 18th birthday I went in one afternoon and was given a pill to take that night and go in the next morning. I took the pill. I sat on my bed eating dinner. I was in such excruciating physical pain. I figured out (years later) that the pill was to begin contractions. My sister couldn't get off work so she took me in the early morning and was to pick me up after work.

I remember lying on a cold table and being hooked up to some type of clear suction tube. I actually saw my son, Michael, come up through the tube. I will never forget that moment. I thought that he was quite large for 12 weeks of gestation. After the procedure, the nurse looked at me and said as if she was telling me about the weather, "By the way, you were 22 ½ weeks along; we couldn't have done this if we would have waited any longer." She walked out of the room and turned off the light. I lay there on that cold table in the dark contemplating what was just said to me.

That meant that who I thought was the father wasn't. I was devastated. I thought that Michael's father wanted nothing to do with him, but that wasn't the case, because I had told the wrong man. I had to lie on that table in the dark for several hours waiting for my sister to pick me up. I felt victimized. They had lied to me. They had known the entire time how far along I was. I had the first of years of nightmares in that room on that table. I cannot describe to you the guilt and shame I dealt with for years in regards to this one decision. It wasn't until after the birth of my first daughter in 1988, that I shared this with Michael's true father. I carried this guilt in my heart for over 8 years. I carried unforgiveness toward myself, my family, and the other people involved even longer. I also believed that this was the one thing God could not forgive.

Since that time I have had multiple female problems. Shortly after that I had a cyst on my left ovary rupture and had emergency surgery. I have had two other surgeries on my female organs. This might not have been related, but I guess I'll never know.

We are told that women should have the right to choose. I was not given a choice. I was led to believe that this was the only choice I had to make. I was led to believe that I could not give this child what it needed or deserved. I, now, don't believe my son deserved death especially in the manner it was carried out. Women should be told how the decision of abortion could affect them physically, emotionally and spiritually. I believe all women should be given a list of *all* choices, including adoption and even raising the child on their own. I believe women should be given a directory of churches in the area that give pregnancy counseling so they can choose in which manner events unfold. If we are going to allow women to make choices shouldn't they be given some idea of what the choices are? Shouldn't women know all their options and at least have their own voice be heard?