

Kansas House Committee on Federal and State Affairs

HCR 5003 Value Them Both Amendment for Life - Proponent

January 15, 2021

Chairman Barker and members of the Committee:

My name is Danette and I chose to have an abortion many years ago. I would like to share with you how that choice affected me. Thank you for this opportunity to speak to you in support of the "Value Them Both Constitutional Amendment for Life".

I was approached and asked if I would share my experiences over the course of the last 37 years related to exercising my right to an abortion. I stand here before you, because it is only by sharing my choices and their impact, can anyone begin to see the lingering effects that no one can really know without living it. My only concern is that words are not strong enough to convey the aftermath of a choice that was supposed to "fix" something. I have to believe if someone had spoken out and been placed in my path, I might have made a different decision.

When I had my abortion, I had no idea what I was entering into nor the change in me that would take place and reside hidden for many years to come. I remember leaving out the back door after my procedure. It was sunny, the sky had no clouds and I felt dead inside. I was married and the abortion would have been my third child. I should have known better but I didn't. Fear played a big role for both my husband and myself at the time. He did not want another child and wasn't sure if he wanted to stay married if I went through with the pregnancy. It sounded like an alternative and I agreed for him to make the appointment. I can't believe I barely knew anything about abortion but I didn't. You go about life, something scary happens and it's not like there is a lot of extensive research done before the appointment is made. We arrived at the center and I remember every detail about this event, even the part when I knew my soul had been torn and I would never be the same person. This would be something I would never forget. The details related to this day has stayed burned in my memory, unlike other events like taking vacation or a major surgery. To this day I can recall every detail.

So how was this the best solution if the pain remains? Something sad, depressing, and destructive had replaced the child I terminated. The fear I went in with could not compare to the fear I came out with. I did not feel relief; I did not go out and share about my abortion even though it was my right to have one.

Instead, I walked out the back door and knew through and through I could not undo what had just been done. I knew my life had changed for the worse even though no one could tell on the outside looking at me. I knew my marriage was doomed at that point and I would never feel the same.

A week later I looked like I was 9 months pregnant even though it was estimated I was less than a month pregnant at the time of the procedure. The darkness and seclusion was building in me and here I was a week later being told I had to do the procedure again. My mind had went from a mentally healthy one, to a week later screaming that they had messed up taking my child and they wanted to finish what was started with the first procedure. I had the appearance that my life was still the same before the abortion but not deep inside. I had to go back to the clinic. They guessed that maybe I was having a blood clot and if not addressed, would kill me. The assurance indicating that the abortion was harmless and I would feel better during the first visit was no longer present.

I know what happens when you walk in the front door and leave out the back door. The baby was gone and so was a part of me. I didn't say a word; the whole battle was in my mind and would be for many, many years to come until someone started helping me sift through why I had self-sabotaging behaviors. Not the kind where I was addictive and it was obvious to those around me, but the kind where I would allow myself to be abused mentally and emotionally, where I would push myself to the limit and stuff down my feelings. If people tried to get too close I would smile and be witty, but the subconscious goal was for no one to see my secret, not even me. Prior to the process I tried to ask questions of the staff and doctors but was pushed off and instead given a lot of encouragement to focus on the choice that would enable my life to carry on. It didn't. There was no redo.

My husband and I grew apart until we divorced. The children we did have got caught in the middle. At the time, I had no way of knowing that I would spend decades with

a subconscious fear that my children would be taken from me, as punishment for what I had done. I had no way of knowing that the person who was usually an optimist was experiencing depression and denial. I stayed so busy and remained that way for many years to come, to avoid the pain deep inside my mind and heart.

I was among the lucky ones to have others stay the course with me. After many counselors, praying and finally seeking help specially designed to help me identify and release the pain that I wasn't aware was there, did I start mourning for the loss due to my choice. At this time I started seeing how I had been standoffish and saw myself as worthless, even though I had advanced in my career. I imposed my fear on my children due to a choice I had made a long ago. That choice closed one door but opened another door that impacted my ability to lead an emotionally healthy life. It actually emotionally disabled me.

It wasn't until after I had gone through my own healing and started helping others in their own post-abortive healing, that I saw that a "simple procedure" meant to "fix" an issue, a procedure that was my choice, had changed me forever. I traded having my child for a life of subconscious self-destructive behavior. Seeing so many other women come forward and seeing that they were suffering in similar ways, helped me see that I wasn't alone. *A choice was given with no mention of the negative outcomes that broke us.* We were given false assurances and here we were, years later, seeking healing.

I was and I am not alone. This is a silent epidemic being created. Most women have no way of knowing what awaits them on the other side. To call abortion a right is an injustice to women. To date, I have met no one that brags about their choice. Abortion leaves a long lasting impact on our society. The mental illness, depression and so many other destructive behaviors that result are a horrible price for women and society to pay, all for a choice that some people want to enshrine into law as a right. You would have to experience it to really understand it, but then you would be one of us. And I don't recommend it.

For these reasons, I ask that you allow this amendment to be put on the ballot to be voted upon by the people of Kansas.