

Kansas House Committee on Federal and State Affairs

HCR 5003 Value Them Both Amendment – PROPONENT

Mrs. Maria Cangiani, APRN

January 15, 2021

Chairman Barker and Members of the Committee,

Thank you so much for giving us the opportunity to stand today in support of the Value Them Both Amendment for Life.

I have been employed in healthcare for almost 15 years, 9 as a nurse practitioner. I have worked with various diseases, and people of all ages, ethnic backgrounds, sexual orientation, religions, and values. My professional experience is in many settings; pediatrics, maternity, emergency room, and most recently, the Covid-19 clinics. I speak 3 languages, English, Spanish and my maternal language, American Sign Language. Both my parents are deaf.

While my life has been so blessed with a wonderful husband and children and my work in healthcare, I have been on a long journey of pain and healing because I experienced, when I was still almost a child myself, sexual assault and abortion. I want to be sure that mothers experiencing pregnancies in profoundly tragic and difficult circumstances have protections I did not, I am here today to defend Value Them Both.

I spent my childhood striving to please my parents, who were both deaf. I got good grades in school and played club volleyball. I was not popular and so, when I was invited to a party with football players, it was the most exciting news, as a teenager, that I could have received. Upon arrival there was a large and noisy crowd. Being so young and inexperienced, when I was asked to join in a party game with some of the football players, I did not realize what was happening. I was sexually assaulted by multiple people and when it was all over, I was told by the girl who brought me to the party that it was my fault and to keep quiet about the whole thing so nobody would get in trouble. The boys' careers were at stake and we needed them to win the state championship and/or not ruin their chances for a college scholarship.

Sometime after, when I was injured in volleyball, I had to take a pregnancy test prior to an x-ray. The doctor came back to the room and told me that I was pregnant. I started to cry. When my mom asked me about it, I just signed to her that he pushed on my leg too hard and it had hurt. Leaving that appointment with my mom, I felt utterly confused. I was thinking about what that

pregnancy test meant for my future and how it would disappoint my friends, teachers and especially my parents, their friends and our priest and our status quo. .

A friend I knew took me to Planned Parenthood. They did not require having a parent there for consults. I was brought into a room to discuss my “issue.” I recall the lady reacting in a way as if I’m just the “next person” she had to talk to. They had pamphlets with pictures of women smiling and happy. A lady or nurse there, slipped out a piece of paper from that baggie. On that paper, listed the procedure of “removing the pregnancy” and it listed out the cost. Brief questioning of my last menstrual period to determine how far along I was. “Approx 20 weeks.” she said under her breath which led her to an expression of questionable smirk to “good riddance” on her face. She had me sign some paperwork and scheduled an appointment to come back in to help remove the pregnancy. No ultrasound, no terms of “baby” was used, no other options were discussed. I literally had no understanding of what I had just signed up for. All I know that they were only resource and they were the place that would “care for me and my overall wellbeing.”

I returned to Planned Parenthood for the “removal of the pregnancy” with my mother. It was a moment that I can’t explain but could only describe the ambiance to be “eerie”. I was surrounded by other ladies who appeared pale, sad, confused, not joyful as I had seen in pictures in the pamphlets I received. After having done the dilation part at home with Cytotec, I was ready for the evacuation of my what I know now, was my child. Through the whole procedure, I was unaware of what was happening to me, what medication was given and why I was getting it. I was monitored for a while with my mom at my side; no one communicated with my mother, but only through me- her minor-aged daughter signing to her. I was discharged. I recall going home, feeling crampy and when I got home, I laid in bed for hours that day, not realizing what I had just done. Soon enough, life kept moving along and I jumped right back into the swing of things. Volleyball, school, partying and boys. Just as if nothing was wrong. Yet I felt incomplete.

In 2002, I learned more about abortion and what it was until I finally realized... I had lost my baby...I had made this decision without understanding what I was doing. My life was deeply impacted by this loss of my baby whom I later honored by naming him Jererimani. He still lives in my heart.

I was only a child when I became pregnant and my mother, who was trying to do what she thought was best for me. We were given almost no information about the abortion – what was going on with my baby at the stage I was in, what did the drugs do to my body, were there any risks and how would the abortion impact my relationship with my baby and my parents. All they told me was that they were going to remove the tissue and pregnancy and that everything would be just like before.

They never asked anything about the assault or referred me to counseling. They didn’t try to find out if I was in danger of being assaulted again. They didn’t tell me to take some time to decide what was best for me.

I believe that every woman has the right to be fully informed about these elements of abortion. Without Value Them Both, the abortion industry will not be required to give accurate information about fetal development or the side effects or who is going to perform the abortion.

Because I was a victim of sexual assault, I am so deeply pained every time I hear a politician talk about pregnancies resulting from assault and assuming that all women want is to abort the baby. Victims have a right to information and need support so they can make the decision that is best for their whole life.

I wish so much that someone had defended my right to information and refused to use my trauma to advance the agenda for abortion. I ask each of you to be that voice for women in Kansas and their babies.