

House Federal and State Affairs Committee

9:00 AM, Room 346-S

Testimony Opposing HCR 5003

Pamelyn Richardson

Friday, January 15, 2021

Dear Chairman Barker, Vice- Chairwoman Arnberger and Members of the Committee,

I am writing to you today to express my deep opposition to HCR 5003.

I am a lifelong resident of Kansas and a registered republican for the past 37 years.

I can tell you from experience that abortion is absolutely necessary as a basic human right and must remain protected by our state constitution.

There was no sex education offered in my school (Turner, USD 202 KCKS), in my church, in my home, or anywhere else. My parents were married for 7 years before they had me, I am their only child, so I'm sure they knew all about birth control, they just wouldn't share that with me. None of my questions were answered.

In 1971-72, I was a freshman at Baker University in Baldwin, KS. My high school sweetheart became my fiancée. This was during the war in Vietnam. His draft number was 6. Instead of being drafted into the Army, he joined the Marine Corps. He was scheduled to enter boot camp at the end of January, 1972. So one weekend in January we said our private goodbyes in a room at the Holiday Inn in Lawrence. I became pregnant as a result.

I could not turn to my parents for help or advice. I was sure my father would kill me. This is no exaggeration. For example, he beat me badly in July of 1971 just for coming home from work an hour early because I felt sick. My friends were just penniless students like me.

So I asked my fiancée's friends, all of whom worked full time, to give me the money I needed. The only two places abortion was legal then were New York and Washington, DC. The procedure alone was \$150 cash, no checks, no credit cards. With the airplane ticket and hotel, it added up to \$450. That was a month's net pay for a marine corps private.

I was gone from baker for 24 hours. Alone. No one on earth knew where I was during that time. If I had been robbed of the precious cash on the mean streets of DC, I would be someone's mother today. My parents died never knowing any of this.

Until that day, I had never had a gynecological exam. I'd never even seen a speculum. I didn't not know what an abortion actually entailed. It was quite a brutal assault on my tender sensibilities. I was not given any medication during the procedure.

After an hour's rest I was sent off to the airport with birth control pills, and a postcard that had their toll free number and a dime taped to it, in case I, like 3 in 100, got a post op infection. Two days later I woke with a fever of 103. I called the number from the payphone in my dorm lobby. They called in a prescription for antibiotics to the pharmacy in Baldwin. I didn't have enough money to pay for it. I was fortunately able to borrow the sum from a friend of my roommate.

I have never had any regrets over my decision.

My fiancée and I did not marry when he returned from 3 years overseas. He had PTSD. He had a terrible temper and ultimately became violent to me. For the next 25 years he rarely held a job. He drank to excess. He did marry a woman he impregnated at age 30. I have been friends with his daughter for 5 years now. She tells me most times she was raised in abandoned houses with no utilities eating government cheese and relying on the charity of churches. Her parents later divorced and her father had a totally debilitating stroke in his 50's. He still survives at age 66.

Once I had the knowledge of birth control and access to it, I took great care to never become pregnant again. I had a tubal ligation at age 25. I have never regretted that either. I have been married for 37 years to a great guy and raised his stepdaughter as my own.