



PROPONENT TESTIMONY for HB #2789

To: House Committee on Health and Human Services Chairwoman Representative Landwehr and members of the Committee

From: Bridgit Smith, CEO for Insight Women's Center

Date: February 16, 2024

Madam Chair Representative Landwehr and members of the Health and Human Services Committee-

My name is Bridgit Smith, and I am the CEO for Insight Women's Center in Lawrence, KS. Thank you for the opportunity to provide written testimony as a PROPONENT of bill HB #2789.

For over two decades, Insight Women's Center in Lawrence, KS, has been a beacon of support, offering a sanctuary, essential medical services, and unwavering encouragement to individuals navigating the challenges of unplanned pregnancy. Our mission is simple yet profound: to meet each person exactly where they are, extending hope and valuable assistance free from judgment or financial burden. Our aim is to empower them with the truth about their pregnancy and their inherent worth, guiding them towards a life of abundance.

As a program centered on women's needs, we firmly believe that no woman should face the journey of unplanned pregnancy alone. While we do not provide or endorse abortions, our center stands ready to support women regardless of the path they choose. Whether through educational classes for parenting, facilitating adoption processes, or offering an after-abortion support group, we are committed to accompanying our clients every step of the way. Moreover, we extend our support and resources to the fathers involved, recognizing their importance in the decision-making process, and offering guidance before, during, and after pregnancy.

Our goal is to reach the woman who believes that abortion is her only option. No woman wakes up and thinks, I want an abortion today. There's something driving her to think she has no other choice. The root cause often narrows down to fear, and that fear is magnified by the feeling that she's all alone in her pregnancy.

Allow me to share a story that reiterates the previous statement and exemplifies the breadth of programs and support our center compassionately offers. Situated near one of our state universities, we have been able to assist numerous women pursuing their college education while navigating the challenges of pregnancy.

Many years ago, a KU athlete came in for a sonogram. She was a promising swimmer at the university on an athletic scholarship. She had taken a home pregnancy test, gotten a positive, and figured out she was

probably about ten weeks pregnant. She described herself as heartbroken that she would need to get an abortion or give up all the athletic ambitions that she had been training for most of her life.

After the free sonogram offered by our center, she said seeing the baby and the heartbeat blew her away. She said she could not wrap her head around this innocent beating heart paying the price for her mistake.

The father of the baby wanted her to get an abortion. He broke up with her in part because she decided to have the baby. Many of her fellow athletes thought she was crazy for delaying or giving up her swimming career just to have a baby. Fortunately, she had a coach who told her there were ways for her to have her baby and continue to pursue sports if that was what she wanted to do. The coach helped her work out a plan for completing the rest of the semester while still competing and planning what to do next.

The client came to parenting classes, worked through her plans with the client advocates, and took advantage of community referrals and services Insight Women's Center didn't provide.

At the end of the semester, she transferred to a smaller school near where most of her family lived. She had a baby boy, and with her family helping with childcare, she finished college and competed on the swim team. She married and her husband adopted the son she did not abort. They went on to have three more children, and she started her own sports supplement and personal trainer business. She won several championships in women's bodybuilding. She also said she loved being a mother. She said she loved doing creative things with her children. She and her daughter started an online business making and selling hair accessories.

She said we could use her story anytime we wanted because she hoped other women would see that you can choose to have your baby from an unplanned pregnancy and trust that you can still have a successful future. She also said that coming to the center helped change her life and gave her the information and support she needed to make one of the best decisions of her life-- to have her son.

Roughly a month ago, a KU athlete visited our center for a sonogram, convinced that she needed an abortion to continue her athletic pursuits. However, after receiving a sonogram and hearing the previous KU swimmers' story, she seemed less resolute about her decision and more uncertain about whether abortion was the best decision for her. With ample support and encouragement from our team, she departed our center, empowered to make a choice grounded in truth and informed by facts, rather than driven by fear.

All our comprehensive services and support are provided to our clients completely free of charge. For most women grappling with an unplanned pregnancy, confidentiality is paramount as they confide their fears and uncertainties. A common inquiry we receive from students is whether we will bill their parents' insurance. We can confidently reassure them that we do not, as all our services are offered without cost. Receiving reimbursement through the Pregnancy Compassion Act for the counseling and education we offer our clients will complement our donor support. This will enable us to sustain our services for the growing number of women and men seeking assistance at our center. It will also unlock additional resources, allowing us to maximize the impact of every donated dollar. With the ability to eliminate our mortgage, we can redirect funds to expanding our services and replicating our comprehensive programs in an underserved community in northeastern Kansas. For these reasons, and the many other potential positive impacts I strongly urge you to say "yes" to HB #2789. Thank you for your time.