

Testimony submitted via email.

March 14, 2017

To Chair Greenlick, Rep Nosse, and the fellow members of the Health Care Committee:

Thank you for taking the time to consider HB3391. I am a constituent of Rep Nosse in Portland Oregon and I urge you to vote in favor of this important legislation. I want to see us codify Oregon's priority on reproductive health care for all Oregonians. Passing this legislation will make a difference for countless women and innumerable families across our state. Please consider my story as you consider this bill.

Last September 27th my wife gave birth to our second daughter. That last sentence should be cause for a celebration but unfortunately we had come to know in the weeks leading up to her birth that our baby was missing major infrastructure from her brain. At 20 weeks of pregnancy we went for a routine ultrasound, after which we were called into dozens of appointments with increasing levels of urgency and heartbreak. We came to know that if our daughter survived birth, her life would be one of suffering. We came to know, that even though we desperately wanted this child, this world would not be good for our baby. We came to know that abortion was our only option. At just under 24 weeks of pregnancy, we went to the labor and delivery ward at the Kaiser hospital at Sunnyside. My wife was given medication to induce labor and for the hours we spent in the hospital, we were treated with the utmost respect and compassion. Our daughter's life was welcomed, no matter how short it was. We were allowed to hold her and kiss her, to read poems and sing her songs. Her grandmother even held her in her arms and whispered in her too-small ears. When it was time, we did the hardest thing any parent could ever be asked to do, we handed our baby back to the nurse, said a last goodbye, and began to grieve. Our child was born. An hour later, our child died. We knew both would happen.

I imagine this is not your picture of abortion. It was not mine. But in the end, this is the shortest way to tell you of my family's late-term abortion.

This is the worst thing that has ever happened to me. From the first worrisome call to this very moment, it is the hardest set of decisions and experiences that I have ever faced. But one thing has remained consistent through all of these experiences, even to now: I know I am lucky. While it feels like the worst of luck to lose your daughter in such a way, I know that I am lucky. I am lucky to live in a time where medical science makes it possible to know that the brain of a fetus is missing major architecture. I am lucky to live in a state where families are allowed to make such a choice up to 24 weeks. I am lucky to live in a community where top-rate hospitals, equipped to provide such insight and compassionate services are available. And, importantly, I am lucky to have a job that provides insurance so that all of this care is financially feasible.

It's really this last point that brings me to you, to your consideration of HB3391. My wife, daughter, and I received the best of care with our Kaiser insurance. We were told all of our options at every juncture. We were told straightforwardly when medicine's ability to tell us what the right path forward had ended. We were asked to make our own decisions. We were allowed to hold and love our child, even if we knew she would die. We were allowed to say goodbye. I could not have imagined the reality of losing a child before it happened to me. Now that it has, I cannot imagine what it would be like to be 'unlucky' in my situation. What would it be like to face this type of reality and not have the choices we had? What would it be like to face this and not have insurance? Or to have insurance and find out at the same time as you learn all of this about your baby's brain you find out that your insurance doesn't cover abortion services—that to make the decision that we did would cost \$10,000 or more. What would it be like to have your heart broken into a million pieces and go into bankruptcy because of it? I really can't imagine.

Passing this bill would take one important step in ensuring that no family, no woman, when faced with the worst set of circumstances will have to wonder if their insurance coverage, will be the reason that they can get the help they need or not. There are many reasons to feel good about passing this bill. There are many reasons to continue to strengthen our systems of care and coverage for women and families. But I offer you one vantage point from which to consider why you would vote yes. Could you imagine facing the facts that our family did and not being lucky? Could you imagine what it would be like to find yourself in need of help that was impossible to access or care that was not covered by insurance companies?

Thank you for considering my family's story as you imagine the families that you represent in Oregon. Pass this bill and ensure that as many families as possible have access to the care that I received.

Sincerely,

John Mayer

SE Portland Oregon