



Changing One Life While Saving Another

Chairwoman Landwehr and Members of the Committee,

Thank you for the opportunity to present testimony in support of House Bill 2429. My name is Kelly Werkowitch and I am the Executive Director of Nativity House KC, Inc.

Nativity House KC is a Non-Profit 501(C) 3 maternity home. We serve our community by providing no cost housing, services, and programs for homeless pregnant women of 21 years of age and older and their child(ren). We operate a residential maternity shelter in Wyandotte County, Kansas as an alternative to abortion that ***changes one life while saving another***. At Nativity House we strive to nurture the whole women; mind, body, spirit and soul. Physical health, mental health, and spiritual health are all equally important.

Our mission is to provide help, hope, healing, shelter, and services for homeless pregnant mothers and their child(ren) in a home-like environment. Nativity House provides the following support and services:

- Safe and secure housing
- Case management
- Mental health counseling, facilitation, and Trauma Informed Care support
- Educational and vocational guidance
- Nutritional meals and education
- Clothing and personal supplies
- Financial education
- Prenatal and postnatal education and care
- Newborn, infant and early childcare classes
- Positive role models
- Transportation
- Recreational activities
- Self-care
- Aftercare and transition resources
- Spiritual development
- And more!

Care and support continue through pregnancy and for the first year of the child's life to prepare both the mother and the child for a brighter future. Once a mother has completed our program, she can transition into independent living with the education, confidence, skills and support necessary to end this battle of homelessness. Our goal is that every mother and child is given the opportunity to heal, grow and succeed. We support the mothers' desires to graduate from this program with the values, insights, and tools to not just survive, but thrive.

In the five years that I have been involved with Nativity House, I have had the opportunity to serve many incredibly strong, intelligent, and resilient young women. While their stories of abuse, strife and suffering are disturbing, their stories of success are even more inspiring.

In 2017 I met KG. KG had come to Nativity House while fleeing an abusive home life. When she found out she was pregnant, she realized that she could not and would not raise her child in her current situation with her drug addicted mother. She was homeless, scared and alone. KG was also determined to create a better



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life for herself and her daughter. Her daughter was born very prematurely and KG herself suffered a terrible reaction to her epidural. She named her Trinity and was truly a miracle! We were able to support KG and Trinity in a great time of need. KG moved into independent living and worked for Nativity House as an administrative assistant to gain employment experience. She would also meet with prospective clients/mothers to give advice and answer questions. She was a beautiful voice of calm, support and comfort for pregnant homeless women who were feeling the familiar fear and helplessness that she had experienced. I remember her candid and compassionate advice “I may not have wanted to do some of the things (requirements), but I did them anyway because I knew where I wanted to be!” KG is now living independently and thriving with her husband and daughter. Our miracle baby Trinity is a beautiful and healthy 5-year-old that we still hold dear in our hearts.

In 2017 I also met SM and her son Karter. SM had come from a very physically and mentally abusive home life. SM shared with us that her mother had sold her to men for drug money at a very young age. She had been moved between family members’ homes for several years. In her mid-twenties SM was raped. She was alone, abused, and pregnant but SM desperately wanted to keep her baby and be a better mother than she had as a child. SM continued to suffer with her mental health. To her the word mother did not have a good connotation and yet here she was a mother herself. She did not have a role model for a healthy nurturing relationship. She did not know how to bond with her child, trust others, or form relationship attachments. SM had a battle to fight but she was no longer alone. She received the love, nurturing, education and mental health care that she deserved. SM moved back to her home state to be reunited with her older daughter that had been placed with family. She attended school and earned her CNA license. She still struggles at times but is grateful to have her son and family support. Karter is a handsome boy who started school this year. She still keeps in contact with me, and I look forward to her calls and pictures. Her success and happiness bring us such joy.

In order to continue this mission and grow our organization to serve more women and families we need to open more maternity homes and hire additional professional staff. The HB 2429 bill would provide essential funding to reach our goals. With a state alternatives to abortion program funding, we would be able to accomplish the following:

- Purchase permanent housing with multiple locations.
- Provide onsite childcare options.
- Hire more professional employees to provide much needed care such as domestic violence therapist, drug and alcohol sobriety specialist, and program coordinators.
- Purchase and maintain more educational programs and computer equipment.
- Purchase another vehicle for client transportation.
- Develop and continue staff education and support services
- Develop and fund after care programs that continue to support families after they have graduated from our program such as rental assistance, professional services, childcare assistance, mentorship programs and education scholarships.

Thank you again for your time and for allowing me to share about Nativity House KC, our program and the women and families in our community that we desire to serve. On behalf of these families and our organization, I would ask that you please pass HB 2429 out of committee favorably.



NATIVITY HOUSE KC

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Sincerely,

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Nativity House KC is a 501(c) 3 licensed organization with the IRS and a charitable corporation in the state of Kansas.