



Proponent testimony for HB 2813

TO: Chairman Rep. Carpenter and members of the Committee of Federal and State Affairs

FROM: Hayley Thomas

DATE: March 12, 2024

Dear Chairman Carpenter and committee members,

My name is Hayley Thomas. I am a staff member at A Better Choice, a pregnancy center in Wichita. I appreciate the opportunity to share testimony in favor of HB 2813 today.

As a pregnancy center, we see hundreds of women every year who face unplanned pregnancies. Sadly, that includes women who are being coerced into choosing abortion. I would like to share two of their stories with you today.

The first was a teenage girl whose mother told her that she would make her have an abortion because she was too young and "didn't have the right" to raise a child. The client told us that she was very afraid of her mom's reaction if she told her that she wants to keep her baby, as her mom has been verbally and physically abusive in the past. We filed a DCF report and got the authorities involved in this case, but if we did not have the chance to bring the client back alone and talk to her, we probably would never have found out this information. By establishing trust with a client, explaining all of their options fully, and giving them an opportunity to share their experience privately, we can identify situations where coercion is taking place and hopefully protect these clients from the physical and emotional pain of an unwanted abortion.

The next client was incredibly happy to be pregnant, until finding out that there was a rare complication with her pregnancy - the baby had implanted in her previous c-section scar. She got the opinion of several doctors, each of them told her she needed to abort the child. Feeling defeated, but desperate to save the life of her baby, she called A Better Choice seeking help. ABC referred her to a local high-risk, pro-life doctor who listened to her concerns and her desire to carry the pregnancy for as long as possible. They closely monitored her throughout the entire pregnancy and several months later, she delivered a beautiful baby boy. She and her son are alive and healthy today.

These are just two instances where we at A Better Choice have witnessed women being coerced. Both of these women and the countless others facing similar difficulties deserve to be fully informed and make their own choices. I support HB 2813 so that individuals are held accountable for interfering in a woman's decision regarding her pregnancy. Thank you for the opportunity to testify on behalf of the women we serve.

Sincerely,

Hayley Thomas, LMSW

Director of Client Resources, A Better Choice

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