

It is Sunday afternoon as I write this. I had just sat down by the fireplace with a good book for a rare chance to read something other than The Very Hungry Caterpillar or the rough draft of a middle schooler's book report when I received an email that the House Human Services Committee will be hearing **HB 1362** the next day. I was tempted to think to myself: *They'll do what they're going to do, regardless of what one little testimony might say. I probably am not going to change anyone's mind.*

Then one of my little ones looked up at me, smiling and giggling over the toy he was proud to have mastered. I wondered what he would say if he knew that his mama did nothing, NOTHING to try and influence the decision being made tomorrow that could have major impacts on his life. As the one entrusted with his care, his growth, his life, is it not my duty to do everything possible to positively impact him, even if I question the effectiveness of my efforts? At least, I can tell him (and myself) that I tried.

Ladies and Gentlemen, this is real and it is raw. I have vomited nearly nonstop for five consecutive months for each of my six pregnancies. I have given birth naturally, unmedicated, by C-section, and by VBAC. I have changed over 37,000 diapers, prepared over 71,000 meals, some of which were appreciated, and many of which were not. I have cleaned up carpet and bedding in the middle of the night when a child has been sick, showed them how to wash dishes, and helped them cry and understand and tried to comfort them when their uncle died. I have witnessed their trepidation and their joy upon taking first steps, learning to read, decorating a Christmas tree, and learning how to make friends. I have loved each one of their sloppy kisses as toddlers and cherished real, meaningful hugs from teenagers who are nearly as tall as I am. Their drawings and photos and magnet letters cover my refrigerator, and every night before I go to bed I look at a wall hanging my daughter gave me that says "I love that you're my Mom." And I decide to wake up the next morning, with God's help, to try to be worthy of that love she freely gives me.

Now, some of you may be moved to tears, and others of you may be internally rolling your eyes. My goal in sharing this with you is neither of those reactions, but instead to ask you, respectfully, that until you are willing to *die* for my children, as I am willing to *die* for them, that you PASS HB 1362, and establish that parents are the primary stakeholders in the upbringing, education, and care of their children.

Thank you taking the time to read this testimony.