

As I start to write, I hear tiny feet running down our hall with the biggest smile on my two year old's face screaming "Mom" with so much excitement to see me. I thank god every day for this blessing and can't imagine this world without him. It breaks my heart not every woman is able to experience this unconditional love. Parenthood is something our society takes for granted. Children are raised into thinking this will always be a possibility but what happens when their world is shattered with news they can't? Wait...what....NO?? That has never been in our vocabulary. Being rejected can be a very painful, lonely experience with many individuals feeling ashamed and not willing to share their reality. It's time we speak out and fight for the coverage we so desperately need. I'm 1 in 8.

At the age of 17, I started on birth control after being in a serious relationship for quite some time. I had hopes and dreams for myself so felt this was a necessary step to further safeguard this. My high school sweetheart and I dated for many years and finally got married in August of 2004. I was a recent college graduate and felt completely confident in my career path. It was at that time that my husband and I decided to pursue a family. With no success and having symptoms of menopause, we decided to meet with an infertility specialist. I was diagnosed with Premature Ovarian Failure in July of 2006, just shy of my 24th birthday. My husband and I had multiple discussions with this medical team and at the time, we weren't quite ready to move forward with treatment but instead wanted answers....why?? I'm one of 4 biological siblings with no history of any fertility issues on either side. What went wrong and why me?? I still don't have any confirmed answers but do believe the longevity of my birth control played a role.

Knowing our fate, my husband and I chose to take some time for ourselves and had fun living life to our fullest throughout the next 6 years. We also spent this time slowly saving for our reality soon to come. It wasn't until August 2012 that we started down the path of infertility treatments. I, myself, knew I couldn't biologically have my own child but we had the knowledge that there were alternatives to give us the family we so desperately wanted. For various reasons, we chose egg donation. We started working with my younger sister for the next year and after thousands of dollars and a failed IVF attempt, but knowing we were so close, we switched gears fairly quickly and decided to go through an anonymous donor bank. The process was overwhelming. It's honestly like ordering a new car. Hair color, height, education level, genetics, etc. all played a role in our final decision. We only had access to baby pictures and it wasn't until we paid for the eggs that we got to see an adult photo. Of course, my husband had his responsibilities as well to make this work but we were so determined and financially invested that there was no stopping us now. So with more shifting of our financial situation, we moved forward and I believe we are the second family in the state of North Dakota to try through egg donation.

On February 16, 2015, two embryos were implanted and on February 25th we were told the breathtaking news that one stuck! My pregnancy was fairly quiet compared to all we faced prior. Cale Matthew Hill (named after my husband) was born on November 6, 2015, same day as his courageous dad that decided to fight with me which meant even more to us! We froze our last embryo and attempted again in July 2017. Lane Francis Hill (named after my grandfather) was born on March 9, 2018.

Words can't describe the pain and emotion we've experienced through this journey. It financially broke us but we have our two greatest gifts and couldn't be prouder. We fought hard to get the family we've always wanted. We were fortunate to have the best support system and financial access to funds to accomplish this great feat, not once but twice. Others may not be so lucky.

My two miracle boys are why I fight and I promise to keep fighting until every family has the same opportunity as we did. Insurance coverage matters. It's an important resource that will help struggling couples build their forever families. I strongly encourage you to consider ND HB 1146 because building North Dakota families matter.

Jennifer Hill
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