

To the House Industry, Business, and Labor Public Hearing Committee,

My husband and I were a young couple that experienced tragedy in the death of a young friend. This led to us realizing we didn't want to wait to start a family. I stopped taking birth control only for my cycles to become irregular and to see negative test after negative test every month. We did this for a year.

A year of hearing our family and friends ask when we would start a family. A year living in secrecy about our desire for a baby. A year embarrassed and ashamed that we were not experiencing the quick and exciting joy so many of our friends were.

After a year, we sought help from the doctor. The process was time consuming and we were overwhelmed by the costs of even just diagnostic testing to try to discover what was wrong. The medical community failed us before we even started.

Even though I was told by my health insurance at the time that, unlike other plans, I did have limited infertility coverage, it all depended on how the doctor coded procedures. The doctor was unsure of how these worked and what would be covered. Even when we did pick and choose what we could afford, we were forced to do our own research and become our own advocate. There is a tremendous lack of research and doctors often lump couples into the same treatment plans instead of listening and adapting to the challenges of the couple.

This left us, as a young couple, to spend our free time listening to podcasts, reading articles, and analyzing every little thing about our bodies. As a woman that is overweight, I had to advocate for a doctor to see me as more than my weight and treat the problems I was having. My blood work and other simple testing all came back healthy and within range proving that I was healthy and could carry a child. The only symptom I had was irregular cycles which lead to an unofficial diagnosis of Polycystic Ovarian Syndrome. The fact that I still do not have an official diagnosis is just another way the health system has failed me. There is not enough research established about PCOS or treatment for PCOS symptoms.

Ultimately, it took switching to another doctor, requesting medication, advocating for blood work at timed intervals of my cycles, finding the right supplements for us both, and researching a medical grade device to accurately track cycles when a woman has PCOS (a device many U.S. doctors still do not recognize). We finally saw 2 lines on our pregnancy test and then also on the 50 tests we took afterwards just to make sure on Mother's day weekend 2019.

We then had a healthy pregnancy and a beautiful baby boy.

The important thing to know is that infertility affects 1 in every 8 couples in North Dakota. There is not enough medical coverage for these couples to make the best decisions for them, there is not enough research to adequately treat these couples, and there are not enough informed doctors to give these couples the individualized care they deserve. Ultimately, if something is

not done, research has proven that couples could go on to have unhealthy pregnancies because health issues are not resolved or monitored and couples with the ability to do so will leave this state or seek treatment out of state: an embarrassing travesty to our state. Creating a path of better access to infertility benefits to more people is the best foot forward.

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