

Good morning, Madam Chair Lee and Committee

My name is Jody Clemens and I am here to testify in support of Senate Bill 2195. The Network Bill.

I have been actively involved in prolife work in our beautiful state of North Dakota for four decades in a variety of organizations, including pregnancy resource centers, maternity homes, adoption agencies, sidewalk advocates for life, 40 Days for Life, and post abortion healing and recovery. I currently facilitate Forgiven and Set Free Recovery groups offering hope and healing to women who are suffering the negative aftermath of abortion.

North Dakota statistics state that 833 women on a yearly basis have undergone an abortion at the Red River Women's Facility. That's 833 women in one year. Now let's take that number times the many years the Red River Women's Facility has performed abortions in ND. The Red River Women's Clinic, formerly called the Fargo Women's Health Organization, was founded and has been performing abortions in ND since 1981. That's a lot of years. That's many abortions.

There are potentially hundreds of North Dakota women who are suffering the negative aftermath of their abortion. The Red River Women's Clinic, although no longer in Fargo, only moved their location across the bridge 1 ½ miles from their previous location. ND women will cross that bridge and continue to seek abortions at the Red River Women's Clinic.

The act of abortion that women think will solve a problem, save a relationship, preserve a career, or hide a current live style choice starts them down a long path of self-destructive behavior, emotional distress, and spiritual confusion.

Every year it is reported that 50,000 women will experience serious emotional and mental health problems following their abortion. Not mild problems, serious problems.

The number 50,000 may not seem like a significant number but take 50,000 times the number of years abortion has been legal. 50,000 times 50 years when Roe became the law of the land comes close to 2.5 million women who may be suffering serious emotional and mental health problems.

Abortion is no longer just a word to women who undergo an abortion. It is a real- life event that is always stressful and often traumatic.

As part of my testimony, I have attached some of the emotional, psychological symptoms as well as emotional changes that women may experience following their abortion.

Statistics show that post abortive women are everywhere.

Who are they? They are wives, mothers, grandmothers, your friend, your neighbor, that women you have coffee with 2-3 times a week, your classmate, your roommate, the women ahead of you in the grocery line, the women sitting next to you in church.

But most likely you would never know this because for most women the secret of abortion is kept for years. The average amount of time a woman keeps her abortion a secret is 10 years and some women take this secret to their grave. Last weekend I met a lady at a healing recovery weekend that kept her abortion a secret for over 30 years.

ND is a prolife state. And our numerous ND prolife agencies are a voice of hope to those in an unexpected pregnancy. Our pregnancy resource center, our adoption agencies, our maternity homes do an amazing job. I am grateful for each and every one of our prolife agencies and the sacrificial and loving care they provide.

YET, we also need to be a voice for the 833 ND women that yearly choose abortion. We should not and cannot care for only the women who choose life. We must be a voice of hope and extends hands of mercy to women who choose abortion. I am here today representing Forgiven and set Free, one of the three post abortion outreaches in our state. Forgiven and Set Free offers hope and healing to those suffering the negative aftermath of abortion; as well as to educate the public concerning the negative effects of abortion on women and society.

Senators, although I do support the Alternative to Abortion Bill, Senate Bill 2129, I do see one significant difference in the Alternative to Abortion Bill and this bill, the Network Bill, Senate Bill 2195.

The difference is this. The Alternative to Abortion Bill, Senate Bill 2129 does NOT include funding for the ND post abortion services; while the Network Bill Senate Bill 2195 does include the post abortion service in our state. These services are much needed and they should not be excluded from any ND prolife bill.

Madam Chair Lee and committee, I ask you give the Network Bill, Senate Bill 2195 a do pass vote providing support to those in an unexpected pregnancy; as well as to those that offer seek help after an abortion.

I will stand for any questions.

SYMPTOMS OF POST-ABORTION DISTRESS IN WOMEN

50,000 women each year experience serious emotional or behavior changes after experiencing child loss from abortion. Symptoms may not necessarily appear together, nor will any particular woman experience all of them.

Emotional/Psychological Symptoms

Guilt
Unable to Forgive
Emotional Numbness
Shame
Grief/Sorrow
Unworthiness
Self-condemnation
Feels degraded/debased
Anger/Rage
Depression
Anxiety/Anguish
Loneliness
Bitterness
Confusion
Fears God's punishment
Regret/Remorse
Hopelessness
Helplessness
Panic
Frustration
Feels exploited
Self-hatred
Despair
Feels rejected
Horror
Fears/dreams about losing a child
Flashbacks and/or nightmares
Fear another pregnancy or infertility
Feels inferior
Feels failure

Behavioral Changes

Secretive
Sleep Disturbances
Crying Spells
Divides time into "before" and "after" abortion
Avoids baby reminders
Reduces motivation
Struggle to complete tasks
Struggles with time management
Loss of normal sources of pleasure
Self-punishing and/or self-degrading behavior
Develops eating disorder
Alcohol and/or drug abuse
Suicidal impulses
Promiscuity or frigidity
Loss of interest in sex
Marital Stress
Abusive/tolerates abusive relationships
Compulsive collecting/hoarding
Withdraws from others
Difficulty with all types of intimacy
Changes in relationships
Wants replacement/atonement child
Damages mother/child relationship
Over-protective of living children
Fails to bond with subsequent children
Cutting
Damaged feminine concept
Anniversary/due date reactions