

Lauren Carrasco Testimony in favor of ND HB 1373

I am in favor of ND HB 1373, giving equal protection to the unborn from conception as life begins at conception. My testimony began in 1994. Please bear with me while I give context to my testimony, as it is lengthy.

I was 22 years old, pregnant by a man quite a few years older than I, who was Native American. We married when I was 6 months pregnant. I was on state Medicaid at the time where I lived and the OB/GYN was not a good doctor. He only gave me two ultrasounds during my pregnancy, one at 12 weeks when I was spotting (which he said quote, "normal fetal growth and movement") and another the day my daughter was born by emergency c-section, to quote, "See her position, which was breach, rear end first." As the tech was doing the ultrasound, she had a concerned look on her face. I asked her what she saw, to which she replied, "I don't see any kidneys in your baby." My baby was put through numerous tests, to which the medical professionals determined my daughter was in distress and she needed to be delivered immediately by emergency c-section.

My daughter was born with a rare congenital disease in which one of her kidneys never developed, and the other was half-sized and it never functioned fully, in essence, born with chronic renal failure. She was full-term but because of her kidney disease in utero, her urine output was minimal, which becomes the amniotic fluid, which the baby "breathes" for lung development. At the time of her birth, her amniotic fluid was only 43%. My daughter was full-term but was 4lbs, 13oz, her lungs were underdeveloped, and when the doctors bagged her, they blew holes in her lungs (pneumothorax). She was whisked off to the NICU, had chest tubes inserted and a chest needle into her heart. She was on a ventilator since her lungs were not strong enough to breathe on her own. The doctors told us to, "Make your peace with your higher power because that baby will not be leaving the hospital alive." I had become a Born Again Christian when I was pregnant with my daughter. To make a long story short, I've witnessed the power of prayer. A few days after the doctors said what they said, they told us, "Miraculously, your daughter's lungs are completely healed, and we do not know why or how!" I told them, "We know!"

My daughter was able to come home after spending the first 24 days of her life in the NICU, and I was finally allowed to hold her in my arms. My daughter would face many

challenges during her short life, as she was developmentally delayed with a diagnosis of autism, mild cerebral palsy (she was ambulatory, but her joints dislocated), and epilepsy. I cared for my daughter, and she became my life. Her father worked jobs as a Native entertainer, sharing his culture, but it was not a steady income. He also was a recovering alcoholic who had severe cirrhosis of the liver, but I suspected he continued drinking as he was physically, mentally, emotionally, and spiritually abusive to me.

I became pregnant a second time, six months after my daughter was born. I was very scared as I was having great difficulty caring for my child, who had 2-5 visits per month at the Children's Hospital 75 miles away from where we lived, as well as dealing with her father's worsening health. I was still very young, and individuals in my family, and a doctor asked me how I'd care for two children and a sick husband, with very little income, or resources. Then I was asked, "What if you have another child who has special needs with major health issues again?? How are you going to do it with two??" I was pressured to have an abortion, and I didn't know what other options were available, but that doesn't absolve me of accountability. Ultimately, I made the decision to murder my baby in utero. I also did not tell my husband I was pregnant again. One of my family members took me to an abortion doctor and this family member paid for the abortion when I was 5 weeks along. I remember when they put me under, I felt a "tugging" sensation in my lower abdomen, as I slightly woke during the procedure, and someone gave me more anesthesia. The next thing I remember was waking up, it was over, and I cried. The doctor said, "The fetus was not developing well." The doctor didn't tell me if my baby was a boy or a girl. I left with my family member, and I tried everyday to put the abortion out of my mind, to not think about it, and to focus on my daughter with all her health issues.

I later found out that the doctor who performed the abortion sterilized me at 23 years of age (was it because I was married to a Native American, or because I was on Medicaid at the time, I do not know). He scarred up my uterus so badly that the environment was not conducive to any viable birth, and I never became pregnant again...I *could NOT get pregnant again*, even when planning to try to have more children.

My daughter was not a candidate for an organ transplant. If she could have received one of my kidneys, I would have given one to her. She had her father's rare blood type. He was able to get on a liver transplant list, as the doctors and I thought he was 5 years sober. After he received a liver transplant in 1997, he went back to drinking and within 4 years, he died from liver and kidney failure. My daughter's kidney specialists told me that my daughter would

need to be on dialysis before transplant, even if she could get on a list. They said she'd have to be sedated 5-6 hours a day, 5-6 days a week (because she had great difficulty at the site of her blood), and with having one half-sized kidney, it would take some time for her to come off sedation, only to turn around the next day to be on it again. Basically, my daughter would have had *zero* quality of life. And they also believed with her continued worsening health, that she would not be strong enough to endure an organ transplant. I had to make the toughest decision: to choose ***quality of life over quantity.***

My daughter was such a blessing to me and taught me so much about strength and perseverance. Her little body endured so much pain from her kidney disease. The last two months of her life, she was under hospice care at home. The day she passed away (January 4, 2006), she was not feeling well so I lay in bed with her. Her eyes were looking at something and I asked her what she saw. She told me, "Angels, mommy!" I asked her what she wanted. Her reply, "Be with Jesus, mommy." I asked her, "You want to go be with Jesus?" She replied, "Yes, mommy!" By this time, I was crying but trying not to let my daughter see my tears. I told her, "If you need to go, babygirl, you have my permission. Mommy will be alright. I love you; Nana loves you, Uncle Phil and aunt Lynn love you, and Ernie loves you (my fiancé). My daughter told me she loved all of us too. I called my fiancé who lived in another state and was on shift at his fire department; he was on speaker phone listening to us. My daughter then lay in my arms as I was rocking her. She pushed me away, she then said, "No," and pulled me close to her, I told her, "Mommy is here, I love you, I'm not going anywhere..." she then hugged me, kissed my cheek, her breathing became very shallow, and she passed in my arms. My daughter died a little over two months before her 12th birthday.

Later that year, I moved to where my fiancé was living, only to find out that he had been on dialysis since 2003, two years prior to our meeting and starting to date, and he didn't tell me because he "wanted my focus to be on my daughter." My new husband had been an athlete all his life and used steroids that destroyed his kidneys, and eventually his heart. He also contracted streptococcus twice without getting treatment. When strep isn't treated, it can attack the kidneys, which that is what also made his kidneys worse. I was a perfect match for him, but he had been removed from the kidney transplant list before we met because he continued using steroids. He told me he couldn't and wouldn't stop using them. He believed he *had* to continue using them because dialysis "wastes his muscle." This portion of my story is much longer but I won't go into that for this testimony. My husband died two years and three months after my daughter passed away, and I was devastated again.

I went off the deep end after my husband died, and while I didn't blame God, I became so worldly, living for myself, trying to bury my grief rather than face it, which was very destructive. So, while Jesus Christ was my Savior, He didn't have Lordship over my life...I hadn't surrendered to His Lordship over my life...until late 2019. I was a prodigal whom the Lord drew back to Himself. It was at this time I began watching movies and documentaries about abortion and what the baby goes through during the procedure, whether it is typical abortion in a clinic with torturous tools suctioning out the baby or ripping the baby's limbs apart and crushing its skull, or chemical abortion via the abortion pill. These documentaries broke my heart, and it seriously bothered me to the point that I could not stop thinking about what I had done to my own baby.

In 2022, I became a member of a church plant and through Biblical counseling, I have repented for the murder of my baby, I am so deeply sorry for what I did to unborn child, and I will always have a hole in my heart until I am reunited with **both** of my children in Glory!! The Lord, through His Holy Spirit, has put it on my heart to speak out against abortion, to let women know there are other options like adoption, couples who are willing and wanting to adopt children, even those with health issues and developmental delays, there are sound Christian churches who will go alongside the woman through her pregnancy, helping her and her unborn baby with necessities, prenatal care, food, shelter, etc. I want women to know having an abortion will affect them for the rest of their lives (I carried this for almost 30 years before receiving counseling). I truly wish there had been a law in place that would have held me accountable for murder back when I had an abortion. Were there a law in place, I wouldn't have thought about having an abortion, nor do I believe anyone would have pressured me into having one, knowing the consequences of my actions would have been loss of freedom. I believe abortion should be abolished because it is wrong!! It is murder, and taking an innocent life, especially of those most vulnerable, is not justified whatsoever. There must be equal protection for the unborn! Women and abortionists should not receive immunity or impunity from prosecution. There is no justified reason for the shedding of innocent blood. A baby is not an inconvenience. Circumstances are not a reason to murder one's unborn child.