

BEFORE THE LEGISLATURE OF OHIO
HB228
CHAIRMAN WHITE AND MEMBERS OF THE HEALTH COMMITTEE

PREPARED TESTIMONY OF LEE CARTER

JUNE 13, 2006

My name is Lee Carter and I am the Satellite Director for the Elizabeth New Life Pregnancy Center in Kettering.

I grew up in what society would now call a “dysfunctional home.” My alcoholic father was sometimes violent and often unpredictable making my teen years very scary. My twin sister and I began to look for love and security in things like sex, drugs and alcohol. When we were 17, my sister became pregnant and chose life for her baby. My parents consented to her marriage, and I think that this was the pivotal event in my life. From that moment on my parents treated me as an adult in the house with no clear boundaries for right and wrong.

Greg and I had been dating a couple of years, and although we were not sexually active at the time my father basically gave me the green light but warned me to use protection. Greg and I felt that sex was the natural progression of a long term relationship and so we took advantage of my father’s advice. Greg was pursuing a career in the military and I was in nursing school when the unthinkable happened -- I became pregnant.

Fear and desperation ruled the day. We were both scared, I did not want to disappoint my parents and appear stupid. We felt as though we had no choice. Greg gave me the money and I drove myself to the clinic and went through with the abortion. I don’t have clear recollection of the day or time but the place and people are etched in my mind forever. I remember women crying, but not talking much. I also remember a mother trying to console her 14-year-old daughter before the procedure.

It was a cold place; no staff talked to me. I was only told where to go and where to put my things. No one described what was about to happen or told me of the possible complications. The procedure was short but quite painful. I will never forget the face of the abortionist or his assistant; no words were spoken by either of them. Afterwards I felt violated, alone and was left with a deep sense of regret. I felt immediate remorse and guilt.

Greg and I got married one year after the abortion. We never talked about our choice to end the life of our first child, but the feelings stayed with me over the years and would eventually overwhelm me. Our marriage was rocky at best and I resented him for not “protecting” me or our child. I couldn’t hear the word abortion without sobbing. If I would allow myself to dwell on what I had done, it was more than I could bear. I began to drink more and more alcohol to cope with what I had done and the memories of the abortion. I slowly retreated into a major

depression and even attempted to take my own life. I went into rehab for alcoholism and I was hospitalized for depression.

Greg and I began to talk about the abortion during therapy sessions. Years of grief and bitterness came pouring out of both of us. I was able to forgive him and everyone else associated with my abortion experience but it took many more years to be able to forgive myself.

Today, I work for Elizabeth's New Life Center in Dayton, Ohio as the director and ultrasound nurse. Daily, I share my own abortion experience with women who are contemplating abortion. I also counsel those women who are suffering silently from the trauma and pain of their abortions. They bought the lie like I did, that abortion would take care of their problems. In reality, that's where the problems began. What's worse is that we were never told of the possible physical complications we may encounter such as breast cancer and infertility. I have been blessed to have two beautiful children but live with the reality that I may develop breast cancer because I aborted my first child.

I have heard many stories filled with pain and regret from women who have had abortions. Some of these women are desperately trying to have children now and are unable to conceive and/or carry a pregnancy to full term. They never knew the risk! They were never told!

Fredrica Mathews-Green says this, "A woman doesn't want an abortion like she wants an ice cream cone or a Porsche, but rather like an animal caught in a trap and gnaws off its own leg. Abortion is not a sign that women are free, rather that they are desperate."

Because of my choice to abort my baby, my life has one big hole in it that can never be filled. My husband and I gave a name to our baby, Andrew Gregory. Thank you for giving him a voice today and making his short little life matter.