

Senator Sanborn, Representative Tepler and members of the Health Coverage, Insurance, and Financial Services Committee, my name is Erin Wolf and I'm here to share my experience and my support for LD 820.

I'm 38 years old and live in Falmouth with my husband and three living children. I'm a mother, a wife, a daughter, a sister, a friend, and an attorney. I am also someone who had a second trimester abortion.

We terminated the pregnancy of our third son, Dylan James, on June 2, 2016. Dylan was conceived after many losses. He was so wanted and so loved.

Because I was 35 at the time of my pregnancy with Dylan, we opted for non-invasive first-trimester genetic testing. When I was 12 weeks pregnant, we learned that our baby was chromosomally typical and we were having another boy. We were thrilled and finally felt that we could start planning a life for our third son! The rest of my pregnancy continued normally. All of my ultrasounds showed that he was "perfect" including a detailed ultrasound at 14 weeks. At 16 weeks, I had some routine lab work done, including the Alpha-fetoprotein (AFP) blood test, which screens for open neural tube defects. I really didn't think anything of this testing. After all, we had already been told that our son was healthy.

On May 24, 2016, I received a call from my OB-GYN's office letting me know that my AFP screening had come back as "slightly elevated." My OB wasn't at all concerned that this baby had a neural tube defect, though. I had been taking my pre-natal vitamins, had two healthy children at home, and all of my ultrasounds had shown Dylan looked great. Nevertheless, I was terrified. I couldn't eat. I couldn't sleep. I was a wreck. My OB referred me to a group of high-risk maternal fetal medicine doctors (MFM) for a high level ultrasound, which she felt would confirm that Dylan was healthy.

However, MFM did not have any availability to see me for several weeks. Therefore, on May 26, 2016, I went to my OB-GYN's office for an ultrasound to "confirm" that everything was fine and that the elevated AFP level was a fluke. I made the mistake of going to the ultrasound alone, as my husband was at work. A few minutes into the ultrasound, the ultrasound technician touched my arm and said, "I'm sorry sweetie, but I do see something." I can't really remember the rest of that day except that my OB confirmed that Dylan had an open neural tube defect. He had the most severe type of spina bifida known as myelomeningocele (consisting of an opening on his spine where nerves were completely exposed) and that his brain appeared to be affected as well.

We were stunned and completely devastated. How could this have happened? We had two healthy sons at home. I had done everything correctly. I had taken my prenatal vitamins. This baby was wanted and planned for. I felt like I was living in a nightmare, except no one could wake me up. I could barely function. However, we knew that we needed more information about our son's condition. We fought to get into MFM the next day, when I was 17 weeks, 4 days

pregnant. We had another ultrasound, met with a geneticist and high risk OB-GYN, who confirmed not only that Dylan had myelomeningocele, but that he also had multiple brain abnormalities, including hydrocephalus. His outlook was grim. He would need multiple serious surgeries within the first few days of his life surgery to close the large opening on his spine and one to insert a brain shunt. He would not walk and run with his older brothers. He would not be able to use the bathroom on his own. He would have limited or no sexual function. He would be permanently brain damaged.

We knew that this was not a life that we wanted for our son or for our other living children. So, we made the heartbreaking decision to terminate our much-wanted pregnancy. It was such a difficult and scary decision, one that no parent should ever have to make.

I was induced at 18 weeks, 3 days into my pregnancy. I labored in the hospital for 15 hours and Dylan passed away during my labor. We met Dylan on June 2, 2016 at 3:20 a.m. He was tiny, but beautiful. I held him and talked to him. I told him about his family, his brothers, and why we made the choice to let him go. All that he knew was our love.

The hospital staff also held him, took photographs for us, and took his footprints. I sang him the three lullabies that I sing to my living children at night. That just about shattered me. Dylan stayed with me next to me in my room until I was discharged from the hospital. During that time, I alternated between holding him and crying and holding him again. No amount of time with him would have ever been enough. Eventually, I was well enough to go home. Leaving the hospital without Dylan was the worst moment of my life so far.

It has been almost three years since we said goodbye to Dylan. I have thought about him and missed him every single day since then. I've cried an ocean of tears over our loss. I'm still angry that he was so sick. I'm still angry that we had to face the terrible choice of terminating a very much-wanted pregnancy. But, I will be forever grateful for the sensitive and compassionate care that I received from my medical team. I know that I am fortunate to live in a state where I had the choice to terminate my pregnancy, had few restrictions, and did not face significant barriers in accessing the medical care that I needed.

My insurance plan somehow covered my abortion, which would have cost us \$15,000 out of pocket. Many other women in my situation are not afforded those same rights. Women in our own state of Maine are forced to travel out of state after 24 weeks and to pay exorbitant costs to access the care that they need and deserve. That's not right.

Thank you for listening to my story. Please think of me when you consider your vote for LD 820.