

*Melissa Ohden*  
*PO Box 25531*  
*Kansas City MO 64118*

U.S. House of Representatives  
Re: Born Alive Act  
September 10, 2019

Thank you so much for your continued commitment to the Born Alive Abortion Survivors Protection Act. I wish that I could be there in person today to thank each of you personally for fighting for survivors like me and for all children who will continue to survive abortions in our country, but I had prior engagements today. Please know that I sincerely appreciate each and every one of you.

This bill is vitally important because not only are we learning more and more about the incidence of this happening, as more states begin to collect data on children surviving, but also because the more late-term abortion is aggressively expanded throughout our nation through all nine months of pregnancy, the greater the likelihood will be that a child survives.

As if the number of children surviving abortions wasn't enough, as if the reality of the lack of consequence for failing to provide timely medical care to survivors or even killing them post-birth wasn't enough to convince me of the importance of this bill, my own life story most certainly does.

I'm an abortion survivor, myself. In August of 1977, my birthmother, as a 19-year-old college student, had a saline infusion abortion forced upon her against her will by her mother, my maternal grandmother.

The saline infusion abortion was the most common abortion procedure performed at the time, which involved injecting a toxic salt solution into the amniotic fluid surrounding me in the womb. The intent of that toxic salt solution was to poison and scald me to death. Typically, that procedure lasted about 72 hours—the child soaked in that toxic solution until their life was effectively ended by it, and then premature labor was induced, expelling the deceased child from the womb. My medical records indicate that I didn't soak in that saline solution for just three days, but actually five, while they tried numerous times to induce my birthmother's labor.

No matter what people believe about abortion in our society, most people agree that what happened to me was horrific. But I also hope that people recognize that what happened to my birth mother during those five days was also horrific. Abortion ends the life of its primary victim—most of the time, and dramatically impacts the life of the secondary victim—the woman.

Her labor was finally successfully induced on the fifth day, and I was delivered in the final step of that abortion procedure at St. Luke's Hospital in Sioux City, Iowa. However, instead of being delivered as a successful abortion—a deceased child, I was miraculously born alive.

My medical records actually state “a saline infusion for an abortion was done but was unsuccessful.” They also list out a complication of pregnancy as a “saline infusion.”

I weighed a little less than three pounds, which indicated to the medical professionals that my birth mother was much further along in her pregnancy than the 18-20 weeks pregnant that was estimated in medical records. In fact, a neonatologist remarked that he estimated me to be about 31 weeks gestational age.

Whether the abortionist simply estimated the gestation wrong based on my birthmother’s self-reporting, or he was lying in order to proceed with the abortion, we’ll probably never know. What we do know is that when I was delivered alive that day, there was argument about whether I would be provided medical care. My adoptive parents were told that I was “laid aside,” and that a nurse intervened to save my life.

I am one of the lucky ones—to not only survive an abortion, but to have someone fight to save me. But no one should have had to fight for me. They should have been expected and mandated to do so.

Despite the miracle of my survival, my prognosis was initially very guarded. I suffered from severe respiratory and liver problems, seizures...the doctors actually thought I had a fatal heart defect initially because of the amount of distress that my body was under. They indicated they didn’t know how long I might live, and if I continued to live, that I would suffer from multiple disabilities. Yet here I am today, overall healthy.

Timely medical care is of the utmost importance for a child like me who survives an abortion. I truly believe I’m alive today not only because I was miraculously saved from death in the abortion, but also because life-saving medical care was right down the hallway for me, once someone decided they couldn’t leave me to die.

I’m blessed to be alive, and I’ve been united with my biological mother and many members of both her family and members of my biological father’s family. I can say on behalf of my birthfamily, my adoptive family, my husband, Ryan, and daughters, Olivia and Ava, we are thankful for your support of this bill.

Passage of The Born Alive Abortion Survivors Protection Act will ensure that the fate of survivors like me or the nearly 300 survivors that I’ve connected with through The Abortion Survivors Network, aren’t left in the hands of their abortionist or the “luck of the draw” in what medical professional is working that day.

Thank you for supporting the bill and for all that you do for lives like mine through your legislative work. Abortion survivors fight for our lives in the womb. We shouldn’t have to fight for them again when we’re born alive.

Sincerely,

*Melissa Ohden, MSW*  
*Founder, The Abortion Survivors Network*