

Thank you for the opportunity to speak today. My name is Lacey Layne. I'm a mother and educator residing in the upstate of South Carolina, a constituent of Representative Climer. I'm here today because I strongly oppose H. 3020. This law would ban abortion as early as 6 weeks, before most women even know they're pregnant, and impact important life decisions that should be left up to individuals in consultation with their medical providers and families, **not politicians.**

Today is the first time I am speaking publicly about my deeply personal experience with abortion. In December 2017, I was pregnant with my very much wanted and planned second child. The pregnancy was going great until my anatomy scan at 18.5 weeks. My OB couldn't get all the pictures that were needed to clear the brain and stomach areas of my baby, so he referred me a Maternal Fetal Medicine practice for a more extensive ultrasound. That night my then almost 3 year old son bit into a cupcake, revealing blue icing that announced to him, my husband, and I that we were expecting a boy. We named him Evan and hoped for good news at the ultrasound appointment. After all, we had no known family history of birth defects and we were healthy individuals.

Unfortunately, we received devastating news at the MFM appointment. Our baby boy, Evan, had a rare neural tube defect, Occipital Encephelocele, that affects the brain and occurs when the neural tube does not close completely. Essentially, my baby's brain was growing out through a hole in the back of his skull in a sac of skin causing multiple brain anomalies. If you'd like to learn more about this horrific defect, I dare you to do a Google Image search and I promise that the images you will find are not something you would soon forget.

We learned that day that we had two heartbreaking options. We could terminate the pregnancy or carry to term not knowing when he would most likely die in utero or in palliative care soon after birth. And as if that wasn't bad enough, we were informed that we had to make our decision quickly due to the 20 week ban currently in place. I guess we were "lucky" that I asked my doctor for an earlier anatomy scan due to my eagerness to see our baby because he originally suggested a date that fell after 20 weeks which would have restricted the healthcare we could have received close to home in the Carolinas. Had we received the diagnosis after 20 weeks we would have been forced to travel out of state for healthcare which would have added further financial burden and emotional trauma to our already devastating situation.

After meeting with additional medical specialists who confirmed the grim prognosis and much discussion with my husband, I chose to have a second trimester abortion. I chose to end the pregnancy to avoid the possibility of my baby knowing only a short life outside my body filled with pain. I chose peace for

Even because it was the best decision for him, myself, my husband, and his big brother. I can't even imagine the emotional turmoil that we would have faced had I been forced to carry to term due to restrictive abortion laws. That turmoil would have had a ripple effect on my extended family, my friends, my coworkers, and the students at the school where I worked as a counselor. I am grateful that abortion was an option so that we could provide the compassionate end of life care that spared my baby, myself, and my family from further pain.

I shouldn't have to be here today. I shouldn't have to bare my deeply personal experience with strangers in hopes that those who don't already know it will finally realize that **abortion is healthcare**. But here I am, fighting for basic healthcare rights on behalf of all women. **Everyone has their own personal beliefs about abortion, but it's NOT OK to use those beliefs to legislate other people's bodies.** The freedom to make your own medical decisions should not be up for debate in South Carolina or anywhere else.

I firmly believe that there is no hierarchy in reasons for abortion and that a crisis pregnancy is a crisis pregnancy. No woman should have this personal medical decision made for them by politicians. Please, I urge you to trust women, and vote NO on H. 3020.