

Testimony of Allie Phillips  
Before the United States Senate Committee on the Budget  
“No Rights to Speak of: The Economic Harms of Restricting Reproductive Freedom”

February 28, 2024

Chairman Whitehouse, Ranking Member Grassley, and members of the Senate Budget Committee – thank you for inviting me here today to share my lived experience under Tennessee’s cruel abortion ban.

My name is Allie Phillips and I live in Clarksville, Tennessee. My husband Bryan works for a forklift company, and I run a small daycare out of our home. Together we are raising Adalie, my 6-year-old daughter from a previous relationship.

We are not a wealthy family. We work hard to pay our bills on time each month. I spent the first several years of Adalie’s life as a single mom working three jobs to support her while also finishing up my bachelor’s degree.

Bryan, Adalie and I were so excited to learn that I was pregnant in the Fall of 2022, and even more thrilled to find out we were having a girl, who we named Miley Rose. Everything was going perfectly until the day of my routine anatomy scan – at 19 weeks – when my doctor informed us they had found multiple concerning fetal issues. He wanted me to see a specialist right away.

Several days later, as I waited to meet the fetal specialist, I had no way of knowing that the next 10 minutes would change my life forever.

The fetal specialist came in to go over the results. The list was extensive. Miley’s kidneys, bladder and stomach had not developed as expected and were not functioning. Only 2 of the four chambers in her heart were working. There was no amniotic fluid protecting her and she had a rare brain condition. Her growth was a month behind. She had no lung development. We were told Miley was “not compatible with life.”

Completely broken, I asked, “what do we do now?” The doctor suggested I had 2 options. I could terminate the pregnancy. But due to Tennessee’s ban on abortion, I would have to travel out of state for health care. My second option would be to continue my pregnancy, but risk a miscarriage, a stillbirth or giving birth only to have Miley be put immediately into hospice care.

“How long does she have?” my husband asked the doctor, who said there was no way to tell, but warned that the longer I stayed pregnant, the worse Miley’s condition would get and the more at risk my health and life would become.

Knowing I had a daughter and family to live for, we made the difficult decision to seek an abortion. So instead of grieving this devastating news, my mother and I began researching and calling clinics in states that allowed abortions after 20 weeks. Many did not have openings for weeks. And the longer I waited, the more extensive and expensive the procedure became.

Ultimately, I found a clinic in NYC that could get me in the following week. Then, I had to book flights, find a hotel, arrange ground transportation, and find childcare for Adalie.

We had to quickly figure out how to afford it all. We didn't have thousands of dollars sitting in our bank account. I had to start a GoFundMe effort online to help cover the unexpected medical and travel costs.

Without the help of strangers on the internet, I would not have had the freedom to leave Tennessee or make my own medical decisions – rights my home state denied me. Imagine having to rely on the goodness of strangers to stay healthy for your daughter, your husband, your family.

Days later, I arrived at a NYC clinic alone because – due to security concerns – only patients are allowed inside. I was there for several hours when another ultrasound showed Miley's heart was no longer beating. Distraught, I called Bryan to tell him over the phone that our much-wanted daughter was already gone.

The doctor said my body hadn't recognized that the fetus was dead. She also said that, because there is roughly a 2-week window before the health of a pregnant patient carrying a dead fetus becomes severely at risk, and Miley's last confirmed heartbeat was a week and 3 days prior, my abortion, which was supposed to be the following day, had to be pushed up immediately for my own safety.

I went into surgery alone and sat in recovery alone. I grieved her loss alone, in an abortion clinic in a city I've never been in, far away from the comfort of my home, my family, and my friends.

Being forced to flee my home state for essential health care made me feel less than a human being – like the gum on the bottom of someone else's shoe. No one should be treated this way, not in Tennessee or in the other 13 states that now criminalize abortion, the standard of care I needed in my situation.

Two days later, I flew back home to Tennessee. I had to go back to my life like nothing ever happened. I've never felt as small and inconsequential or unsupported as I did then.

I was so depressed that I couldn't go to work for another week after we got back. Altogether, Bryan and I lost three weeks of pay, which is rough for a family that lives paycheck to paycheck. My parents had to help us pay our bills the following month.

Bryan had just recently started a new job and while we wouldn't know it for a while, his bosses didn't take well to him missing so many days accompanying me to New York and caring for me and Adalie once we were home. He was let go after 3 months and had to find another job, which he did.

Through it all, I continued to share my experience and trauma on social media, to give purpose to my grief. I even went to meet my local state representative to tell him my story and explain why Tennessee's abortion ban needed to be changed. I was shocked when he interrupted me to say

that he thought pregnancy complications could only happen in a woman's first pregnancy. Then I knew for certain that state politicians are making laws against standard medical care they know absolutely nothing about. It's wrong, and it's dangerous.

We want to have another child, all three of us, but we're terrified because Tennessee still bans abortion and criminalizes doctors for providing essential health care for pregnant patients.

Thank you for letting me honor Miley's memory by sharing our story today. Millions of people now live under laws just like Tennessee's. I know I was lucky to be able to travel and get the care I needed, but no one should have to rely on luck to get essential health care. We must have a federal right to access the health care we need no matter where we live or how much we earn.

Thank you.