

Good afternoon. My name is Amanda Perreault and I am speaking in support of HB 1098. When my husband and I were pregnant with our oldest daughter, Philomena, we were overjoyed to welcome our first baby. At 22 weeks, 3 days gestation, we were sent to a specialist. When the doctor came in, she shared some devastating news. She told us she believed our daughter had Trisomy 18, a fatal diagnosis. I immediately told her that abortion would never be an option. She proceeded to pressure us into termination three different times before we even left the room. She told us our daughter would likely never make it until birth, and even if she did, she would only live a few hours, maybe a few days. She went on to describe the severe disabilities our daughter would have. She spoke of feeding tubes, intubation, and hospitals. We insisted over and over that it did not matter, we were happy, able and willing to accept any level of disability. It became obvious that she had only one option in mind- for us to terminate. We asked if there was even a 1% chance that the impact would only be mild to moderate. She told us she did not want to give us false hope.

The devastation we felt from such a diagnosis was overwhelming. We went from dreaming of nurseries, to imagining caskets lined in lace and pink ribbon. We went ahead with genetic testing and found out Philomena did not have trisomy 18, but we were assured again and again that she had "something," even if we would not know exactly what until after birth. As devastating as that initial appointment was, the most traumatizing part of the experience was my doctor pressuring us to end the life of our daughter. She over and over again said to us there was no need for us to go through so much suffering, only to watch our child die shortly after birth. All I could think was, if my child has such a short time to live, why would I kill her? I could see the compassion in her eyes and her desperate desire to save us from pain. But I can not understate the complete violation of trust that came from that appointment. The heavy manipulation in such a moment of vulnerability is one of the most painful memories of my life. Not only did she deliver devastating news, but she stole our peace. We were not allowed even a moment to absorb and process what we were hearing before she launched into her ideas on quality of life. People with disabilities today have to fight constantly for equal rights. And here I was, forced to advocate for my daughter before she was even born.

My daughter Philomena is a happy, sassy, and beautiful first grader. She is reading a full grade level ahead and her teachers have described her as exceptional. Although she does have several chronic health issues, her health is very well managed by her wonderful doctors and most people have no idea she has any health concerns. But even if her life was anywhere close to what my doctors initially predicted, we would love her the same.

Please. Do not attempt to justify late term abortion because of poor prenatal diagnoses. I hear all the time that we cannot outlaw late term abortion because of fetal anomalies, or non- viability. My daughter is that baby. And her worth is not defined by her diagnoses. A life with disabilities is not synonymous with a life of suffering. Failure to out law late term abortion on the claim that women need it to end the life of a child with a disability is nothing short of discrimination. It is time we cast aside this ableist viewpoint and embrace people of all abilities equally, including when a diagnosis is made before birth.

10/1/2017  
10/1/2017

The first thing I noticed when I stepped out of the plane was the humidity. It was a warm blanket, not the sticky, oppressive kind you get in a kitchen, but the kind that makes you feel like you've been hugged by a giant, invisible hand. The air was thick with the scent of tropical flowers and the distant hum of a plane engine. I took a deep breath, feeling the moisture on my skin. The ground below was a mix of lush green and sandy brown, with a few palm trees scattered here and there. I could see the ocean in the distance, a deep blue that seemed to stretch forever. The sun was high in the sky, casting a golden glow over everything. I felt a sense of peace and tranquility, a feeling I hadn't experienced in a long time. The world was so beautiful, so full of life and color. I was in a new place, a new world, and I was loving every minute of it.

The humidity was a relief, a welcome embrace. I had been told that the weather was perfect, and it was. The sun was just what I needed to melt away the stress of the last few days. The air was so fresh, so clean. I could feel the moisture on my skin, and it felt like a warm blanket. The ground was so soft, so forgiving. I could see the ocean in the distance, and it was so beautiful. The sun was high in the sky, and it was so bright. I felt a sense of peace and tranquility, a feeling I hadn't experienced in a long time. The world was so beautiful, so full of life and color. I was in a new place, a new world, and I was loving every minute of it.

The humidity was a relief, a welcome embrace. I had been told that the weather was perfect, and it was. The sun was just what I needed to melt away the stress of the last few days. The air was so fresh, so clean. I could feel the moisture on my skin, and it felt like a warm blanket. The ground was so soft, so forgiving. I could see the ocean in the distance, and it was so beautiful. The sun was high in the sky, and it was so bright. I felt a sense of peace and tranquility, a feeling I hadn't experienced in a long time. The world was so beautiful, so full of life and color. I was in a new place, a new world, and I was loving every minute of it.

The humidity was a relief, a welcome embrace. I had been told that the weather was perfect, and it was. The sun was just what I needed to melt away the stress of the last few days. The air was so fresh, so clean. I could feel the moisture on my skin, and it felt like a warm blanket. The ground was so soft, so forgiving. I could see the ocean in the distance, and it was so beautiful. The sun was high in the sky, and it was so bright. I felt a sense of peace and tranquility, a feeling I hadn't experienced in a long time. The world was so beautiful, so full of life and color. I was in a new place, a new world, and I was loving every minute of it.