

Ladies and gentlemen of the committee, thank you for having me today. I am a mom from Colorado Springs, a long-time advocate for the March of Dimes and this year serving as a Carlson Advocacy Fellow for the group. I am here today to speak in support of HB 19-1122 as the critical resource needed to avoid preventable maternal deaths across our state.

When deciding to have children, for many families, the choice of having kids is easy. They decide to have a baby, everything goes according to plan, and that's the end of the story. For my husband and me, our journey was more difficult. I am a mom of 3 children. Today I am here to tell you about my youngest child, Katie, who was born in 2014.

When I was 18 weeks pregnant, while having an ordinary day at work, I realized that I was bleeding. Concerned, I called my doctor, who assured me that it was normal for that to happen, and she encouraged me not to worry. I did my best to go back to my desk, relax and carry on, but I just couldn't do that. This was my 3<sup>rd</sup> pregnancy, and this had never happened before, and truthfully this pregnancy just felt...different. I called my doctor back and insisted that I be seen right away. They accommodated me, and I rushed down to their office. An ultrasound revealed that I had a high-risk condition that would need to be carefully managed, would include bed rest during my 3<sup>rd</sup> trimester, and an early c-section delivery. My chance of having a hemorrhage was high, and there were so many other risks besides that could end this pregnancy in any number of scary ways.

Some panicked googling led me to an online support group for women with the same condition on Facebook. Those ladies were my lifeline as we tried to support one another, share what we were hearing from our doctors, and did our best to work our way through the circumstances we found ourselves in. By-in-large, most of us made it to the end ok, but not all of us. The occasional “in memory” posts were a harsh reminder that we all needed to take extra special care, and to really take to heart what our doctors were telling us to do.

It was surreal to prepare for a baby in all the ordinary ways, like prepping a nursery, buying pink clothes (this was to be my first girl after two boys!), and picking out names, while I was also updating my will and making sure the hospital had my advance directives for just in case.

I was unbelievably fortunate. My doctors were dumbfounded that I made it to my scheduled c-section date without issue. My daughter was delivered a month early to keep us both safe, and she spent a couple of weeks in the NICU for breathing and feeding issues, but she was strong, and hit her milestones like we hoped, and soon enough we could go home and leave this experience behind us. She is now a rambunctious 4-year-old, who is eating up pre-school, lives in princess dresses, and makes us belly laugh several times a day.

I am here because I was lucky. I hold those other moms who didn't fare so well in my heart, and am here on their behalf, because they all deserve to be here to see their children grow and thrive. This is just one of many ways in which moms lose that chance. There are countless other ways that also need to be studied by the maternal mortality review board to head off this outcome. I encourage you all to vote yes today for those moms. Every child deserves to have their mother.

Thank you.