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**BEFORE THE SUBCOMMITTEE OF THE DEPARTMENTS OF LABOR, HEALTH
AND HUMAN SERVICES, EDUCATION AND RELATED AGENCIES OF THE 116TH
CONGRESS.**

**“THE IMPACT ON WOMEN SEEKING AN ABORTION BUT ARE DENIED
BECAUSE OF AN INABILITY TO PAY”**

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Greetings Chairwoman DeLauro, Ranking Member Cole, and members of the subcommittee. My name is Christina Bennett and I am a pro-life advocate and the Communications Director for the Family Institute of Connecticut. The Hyde Amendment is very important to me and I’m grateful to share my story and why I feel it must be supported.

For over 40 years, the Hyde Amendment has prohibited federal dollars from going towards tax-payer funding of elective abortions. This rider tacked onto the annual appropriations bill protects already vulnerable women from the ravages of the abortion industry. It honors the conscience rights of millions of hard-working Americans who object to their income funding the destruction of innocent lives through abortion. The Hyde Amendment, since its inception, has saved over [two million unborn lives](#) and spared their parents from the pain of abortion.

My Mother’s Story

I was born in a Connecticut hospital in 1981, a year after the Supreme Court ruled in favor of the Hyde Amendment. My mother faced intense pressure to abort, leading her to schedule an appointment at Mount Sinai Hospital in Hartford, CT. The kind words of a Black

elderly janitor encouraged her to walk out of her abortion appointment. “Do you want to have this baby?” she asked. My mother said yes. That question should have been asked by the counselor she met moments before. Sadly the counselor only assured her she was making the right decision by choosing abortion. Before she left the doctor’s office, he tried to coax her to stay, reminding her she’d already paid for her abortion. My mother saw right through his insincere plea, recognizing his concern was about payment, not her welfare. He yelled, “Don’t leave this room!” but she left regardless of his forceful plea.

Women Need Support, Not Abortion

My mother’s story is representative of women who have been coerced into abortion and have received substandard care from an industry profiting from their pain. While working for four years at a pregnancy resource center I saw hundreds of mothers who made the decision to parent, choose abortion, and place their child in an adoptive home. I talked to women who sought abortions because their partners coerced them, they feared being kicked out of their homes, or lacked the practical resources they needed.

Though their backgrounds and stories were different, many were looking for similar things. They wanted adequate housing, better employment, daycare assistance, material resources and emotional support. By offering free services like parenting classes and material support, we met the needs of women and their families. Some of those women decided to parent because we provided the support they needed to continue on in their pregnancy. One of the most desired things was safe housing. In the state of Connecticut, housing for young mothers beyond homeless shelters is hard to come by. I was grieved to see a faith-based home for teenage

mothers, [St. Agnes Home, close after 100 years](#), partly because the state stopped referring clients and funding them.

I understand the reasons presented by the state for the home's closing. At the same time, it's disheartening to live in state where my taxpayer dollars fund abortion through Medicaid but I can't find adequate housing for pregnant women in need. Thankfully, faith-based homes like the Nehemiah House and the Malta House exist, but there is a great need for additional housing for pregnant women. I am often burdened by the reality that my state has financial resources to pay for pregnancy terminations but not to create the structures needed to help pregnant women survive.

Correcting Misunderstandings About Hyde

The Hyde Amendment is falsely accused of being a discriminatory act, but studies show that low-income women of color are actually more supportive of the amendment as well as opposing abortion in general. [One recent study](#) found that 55% of low-income respondents said that they specifically support the Hyde Amendment, and only 26% opposed it (11% somewhat; 15% strongly). In addition, a vast number of respondents said they support the Hyde Amendment, including Black respondents (42%-34%), Latinos (56%-24%), and whites (58%-29%). I have seen this in my own experience: many low-income women I've worked with are morally opposed to abortion and understand the harmful consequences that come with it.

Hyde Saves Lives and Respects Consciences of Americans

Hyde does not take away the legal right to abortion given in the *Roe v. Wade* ruling. The Hyde Amendment has provisions to allow for abortion in cases of rape, incest, and life

threatening reasons related to a mother's health. However the vast majority of abortions in America are performed for elective reasons and the Hyde Amendment wisely prevents those abortions from being federally funded. Furthermore states can decide on their own if they want to fund abortion as [16 states have done](#).

The purpose of the Hyde Amendment is to protect the religious and general moral freedom of those whose religion or worldview obliges them to believe that abortion is the killing of an innocent person—*it is not just because they don't like it, because it makes them uncomfortable, or because they disagree*. It is not only morally unthinkable but also clearly unconstitutional to force someone to financially assist in the systematic murder of a vulnerable class of people—the unborn. As someone who escaped abortion, it is deeply troubling to know I am forced to financially contribute to the death of unborn children.

Is Hyde Racist?

The Hyde amendment protects women from the abortion industry which is rooted in eugenics philosophy, population control, and the unlawful targeting of the Black community. Planned Parenthood locations across the country are acknowledging the racist roots of their organization. The [Planned Parenthood of Greater NY](#) has removed founder Margaret Sanger's name from their Manhattan building. Sanger focused her efforts on limiting the birth of poor, women of color and decades later her specific targeting has led to [79% of abortion facilities](#) being located in low-income minority neighborhoods.

Black women who are just 14% percent of the childbearing population are [3 times more likely to abort](#) and make up over 36% of the abortions. In light of the decreasing Black population and disproportionate rate of abortion in the Black community, pro-abortion extremists

are fighting to increase abortions nationwide through repealing Hyde and offering free abortions to the needy and vulnerable. It is at the least irresponsible and at the most sinister to allow a federal government with a history of eugenics, slavery, Jim Crow laws, and other forms of systemic racism to pay for-profit organizations to end the lives of the vulnerable.

Offering free abortions will secure Planned Parenthood and the abortion industry a guaranteed, steady stream of ready and available clients. The disenfranchised population of low-income Black and Latino women will be prey for an industry already found guilty of [over-billing Medicaid](#), [accepting racially motivated abortion donations](#) and manipulating medical claims to increase financial gain.

Former abortion workers who have left the industry tell horror stories of coercing women to abort for profit and being encouraged to reach abortion [quotas](#) set by Planned Parenthood executives. If unacceptable practices and abhorrent behaviors are already present with the current funding they receive, why should this industry be trusted with additional taxpayer dollars?

While Black women such as Cree Erwin, Lakisha Wilson, and Tonya Reaves have died at the hands of the abortion industry, others have been left wounded. I dedicate this testimony to my dear friend and strong Black mother, Destenie Watford. Destenie obtained a Medicaid-funded abortion at a Hartford county abortion clinic. Staff told her she was past the point of them being able to legally perform an abortion, but they did one anyway. Although CT law states abortions should be funded only for medical reasons, Destenie wasn't asked any questions about her health. They simply took her card and billed the state. Shortly after her 5-month abortion procedure she was rushed to the emergency room for a D&C procedure. Doctors found fetal remains inside of her body. She spent 3 days in the ER and if not for the care of medical professionals and the mercy of God, she would not be alive today.

It is abhorrent that taxpayers are forced to be complicit in this type of injustice and abuse. Even though Destenie willingly chose abortion, she is still a victim to a system that manipulated her. She was lied to by our government to believe abortion was simply an inconsequential woman's right. She joined Medicaid to help her family, not realizing how much the "benefit" of a free abortion would end up costing her.

Abortion is not true aid to the pregnant woman in need. Abortion is the supposed alleviation of her "problem pregnancy" through an act of violence. Research shows that the vast majority of women who chose one abortion, in time, will have multiple abortions. [One study](#) identified 7,388,842 pregnancy outcomes occurring to Medicaid-eligible women in the 17 states which paid for abortion services between 1999-2014. Results from the study showed that women who aborted their first pregnancy were increasingly more likely to have another abortion at each following pregnancy and women experiencing abortions were more prone to hemorrhage and infection, two major causes of maternal mortality, among other adverse consequences.

While pro-choice advocates present abortion as the best way out of dire circumstances, one can conclude that for a significant number of women, having an abortion means they're more likely to have another. This can create an unhealthy dependency on the act of abortion as a band-aid solution to the economic and health disparities that are at the root of the reasons women seek abortion. Removing Hyde would only make it easier for women to have multiple abortions and endure any consequences that could come as a result of those procedures.

I am grateful for the Hyde Amendment and the estimated 60,000 lives that have been saved yearly because of it. One of those lives is my friend Deanna Fortin. Please consider [her story](#) and protect the Hyde Amendment.

"Recent research estimates that the Hyde Amendment has saved more than two million children since its passage in 1976, and it is very likely that I was one of them."

You see, when my birth mother found out she was pregnant with me, she was already a single teenage mother to three kids under the age of 5 years old. Having a fourth child under these circumstances was certainly not ideal for her, and many activists fighting to get rid of Hyde would argue that her situation is exactly why Medicaid should pay for poor women's abortions. But instead of offering to kill her unborn child, free of charge, our government sent my birth mother a message of hope by paying for my prenatal care, birth, and care as an infant.

Our worth in life is not determined by the economic circumstances at the time of our birth. Despite being born into poverty to a teenage mother, and despite spending the first five years of my life in the Louisiana foster care system, my life story is still one of hope. My siblings and I were all adopted, and three of us were placed with the same amazing family. I grew up knowing without a doubt that I was loved, and that I could achieve whatever goal I put my mind to.

For me, that goal was becoming a pro-life attorney focused on ensuring other children got the same chances in life I did. I am proud of what I have accomplished, and the lives I hope I have played some small part in saving. But what if my birth mother had gotten a different message from the government when I was still in her womb?

Policy is not made in a vacuum, and the policy choices we make as a nation deliver a very important message about our values. The Hyde Amendment sends the positive message that one's economic status does not determine one's worth and dignity as a human being. If we were to abolish the Hyde Amendment, what message would we be sending to poor women — that their unborn children are a problem and abortion is a solution? That the government takes a utilitarian stance on whether the lives of their unborn children have value?

Our nation has sent a strong message through the Hyde Amendment over the past 41 years, and has enabled more than two million Americans to pursue our inalienable rights to life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness.”

Thank you for reading my testimony. God bless.