

Chairman Schaffer, members of the committee, thank you for allowing us to speak today.

My wife started cramping in bed. It must have been around midnight. I was asleep beside her. We didn't know it then, but our daughter was already gone. Ten months later, we're expecting a boy. We never had a boy's name picked out. He may arrive the same day we lost Emma, one year later. And as much as we've been told over and over and over again, we struggle to convince ourselves that there was nothing more we could have done to save her.

I remember confusion, not joy or fear, in the ambulance. I didn't know what to expect. I didn't even know we were having a girl. Jess was just four weeks from full term. I tried to be excited. Hospital staff led us from the emergency room to a dimly lit chair in maternity ward. A nurse with sad eyes moved the heartbeat monitor back and forth. The silence became unbearable. My wife began to panic. Our doctor arrived and confirmed our worst fear.

Time stood still the next two hours. A nurse named Jamie told us, "you'll want to hold the baby." I thought that was odd. Why didn't we even want to look, we asked each other? I stepped out of the operating room as my wife took the epidural. We decided against natural birth, which may have taken hours. After the c-section, they placed her on a tray with glass rails. I stole a glance at her pink hat. In the next room, they brought her to us all cleaned up. She was purple and warm. Thin hair. A tiny nose. Her mother's cheeks. She looked like me with her hands swaddled inside a blanket. I couldn't let her go. I shook and wept. I held her only minutes.

We were numb for days and weeks, and filled with fear and confusion to this day. Our doctor said the c-section allowed for a clear determination of the cause of death: a placental abruption. It happens most often when the body experiences trauma. Our doctor mentioned car crashes as an example that only left us feeling more confused. The placenta that nurtured our Emma just separated while we slept. We strived in every way for a healthy pregnancy. There was no trauma and, ultimately, no suitable explanation for our loss. We were told: "sometimes it just happens." Two-thirds of parents like us get that line.

Before my wife had to see them, I signed forms pertaining to our daughter's birth and death. Then I picked a funeral home, later an urn, cared for my wife, and ignored everything else. We couldn't have felt more alone, even surrounded by family.

Fortunately for us, we had supportive jobs, great friends, caring family and amazing co-workers, but not every family does. I'm here to tell you that if you pass this tax credit, maybe someday we'll find the will to stop saying that, sometimes, things just happen. This tax credit will let the next grieving parents know that the state of Ohio isn't ignore what's happened to them, that their lawmakers care enough to recognize stillbirth as something worth studying, understanding and eliminating.

This tax credit, for me, is how Emma might raise awareness for the hundreds of babies born breathless each year. This only happens because we let it. We hope to educate and support. We need your help. Stillbirth is only ever truly out of our control if we fail to do something about it.

Thank you,  
Doug Livingston  
Emma's father