

Chair Schmidt, Vice Chair Deeter, and Rankin Member Somani:

First and foremost, thank you for the opportunity to stand before you today... to speak on a difficult, uncomfortable, but all too important topic – Stillbirth.

I'll admit, I find it a bit funny that stillbirth is still such a taboo topic... as it isn't new. Death isn't new. Even in the Old Testament, thousands of years ago, there are several mentions of stillborn children. Yet, in 2025, people are still uncomfortable with or confused by or downright unsure what to do when a woman or a family experiences stillbirth.

I know it's not something that people want to talk about... but it's something we have to talk about. We need to talk about it. I know that for a fact. Because I've lived it. My son, Miles Owen, my third child, was unexpectedly stillborn on October 11, 2021, at 33 weeks gestation.

I never heard my baby cry. I never saw the color of his eyes. My other children, Noah and Harper, never got to hold their baby brother. They remind me of that often. The rest of my life – our lives -- will be filled with a growing list of "nevers." And even though I'm able to stand before you today, holding it together to speak, this wrecks me, every single day. Miles was, is and will always be part of our family. Our story.

And I'm not the only mother who has, is or will feel this way. According to a study published through the British Medical Journal, there are about two million stillbirths around the world, every single year. That is an astounding and heartbreaking statistic. What's even more heartbreaking, to me, according to this study... is that about one million of those stillbirths, are PREVENTABLE. Essentially, one million lives, every year could be saved globally. And one million families, spared from the never-ending journey of navigating through the grief of child loss.

Prevention efforts are essential.

But equally as important – and also pointed out in the study – is high quality, supportive bereavement care for the families of the other one million lives, that cannot be saved.

Prevention efforts and high-quality bereavement care.

Through the inception of Miles' Mission... sharing my experience publicly as a News Anchor, hearing the stories of other families of loss... speaking with medical professionals... conducting interviews with medical facilities... and partnering with like-minded organizations... I've been forced time and time again to relive my experience with stillbirth. And in the days leading up to... and on the day of my son's death... I've come to realize that the systems we have in place failed me and my son.

Even at one of the best hospital systems in Central Ohio, in the state... there were prevention methods I wasn't taught. Scans I didn't get. Medical terms being used that I didn't understand. And no one bothered to explain it to me or tell me that there are procedures being done to prevent complications I didn't even know I had. And don't even get me started on the quality of bereavement care I received. It's enough to make a person angry and bitter.

But I'm not. I don't blame the physicians, nurses, caretakers, or anyone else involved in mine or my son's care in his 33 weeks of life and eventually his death.

Instead... it makes me want to do better, in Miles' name.

In a city, in a state, in a country where we have some of the best medical facilities and the brightest medical personnel, in the year 2025 – we can and **we have** to do better.

No more babies should die... their mothers, their fathers, siblings, grandparents, aunts and uncles and cousins should not have to mourn them, if it can be prevented.

Birth cannot be a business.

These are real lives. We cannot fail these babies. And we cannot fail their families. Because of the quality of care I received after my son's death, I wanted to die. But what would that have done to my other children? My husband? My family? Think of the trickle-down effect child loss can have. This isn't a hypothetical scenario. I'm telling you from my own experience. One loss is devastating for so many more. Prevention isn't just for the unborn baby. It's for all the lives around him or her. The people who may be impacted or changed for the better... all because he or she got a chance at life.

That's why Miles' Mission exists. Because every life matters. But we cannot make this happen on our own.

And marking September 19th as Stillbirth Prevention Day signals that you agree. The loss of a child is isolating, but it takes a community to work toward healing. These families – one million families like mine -- NEED to know that their loss, their child, will not be overlooked or forgotten... because every life matters.

Thank you.