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**Proponent/HB 135**  
**House Community & Family Advancement**  
**May 19, 2015**

How do you explain to a child that some people think their lives aren't worth living? Well this was the predicament I found myself in on May 16, 2015. I had just sat down at my computer to type this very testimony when my son, Ethan, asked if he could come into my office. And it was then that I had a thought to get his opinion on this life and death matter. "Ethan, some people think because you have Down syndrome, you shouldn't have been born." I almost couldn't even bring myself to string these words together. Just to say these words aloud went against everything moral and right within my soul. "So, what would you say to those people, Ethan?" After a long pause, Ethan said, "Well, that's not right mom. That goes against God." And there you have it; a young man with Down syndrome, only fifteen years old, knows that killing a baby is not right. So why do we, intelligent adults, continue to find this topic so challenging.

I have to be honest and tell you that I grappled a bit with this bill. My initial thought was why should babies with Down syndrome have such a protection, but not others? All babies deserve to live. But then the word "Extinction" hit me. With 9 out of 10 babies with Down syndrome being aborted, extinction is what we are really talking about. How is it that we devote millions of dollars each year to prevent the extinction of tiny fish, but think it's justifiable to let people like my sweet Ethan disappear? I think a lot of it is fear. When I first heard those words, "Your baby has Down syndrome", I was afraid. I was very afraid... and I was very sad... and I cried a lot. And I just wanted to rip up that poem, "Welcome to Holland." But as Ethan took his first steps, said his first words and hit every milestone, Holland looked better and better. For every challenge we faced as a family, there were 10 more blessings!

People with Down syndrome are special, and it's not because they have "special" needs. Ethan is special because he can get an entire gym of people on their feet cheering when he makes a basket during a game. Ethan is special because he can make the burly guy in the car next to us look over and smile when he sees him dancing with no inhibitions. Ethan is special because he can inspire his entire football team as he runs onto the field with gusto. People with Down syndrome make our lives and communities better. If I had a dollar for every time Ethan made someone laugh or smile or feel joy, well, I'd be a millionaire.

I'm a mom of five children. And although I love all my children the same, it's my Ethan that has brought me the most smiles, the most laughter, the most joy. So I ask you to please pass this bill. Even if you need to take God out of the equation, then pass this bill for selfish reasons. Pass this bill so mothers, fathers, sisters, brothers, grandparents, and our world can experience the joys of Down syndrome; give us all these precious gifts. We will all be better people simply by knowing people with Down syndrome. Protect

mothers and fathers from killing their beautiful Down syndrome babies out of fear.  
Education is the answer. Support is the answer. Extinction is not the answer.

## How do you explain to a child that some people think their life isn't worth living?

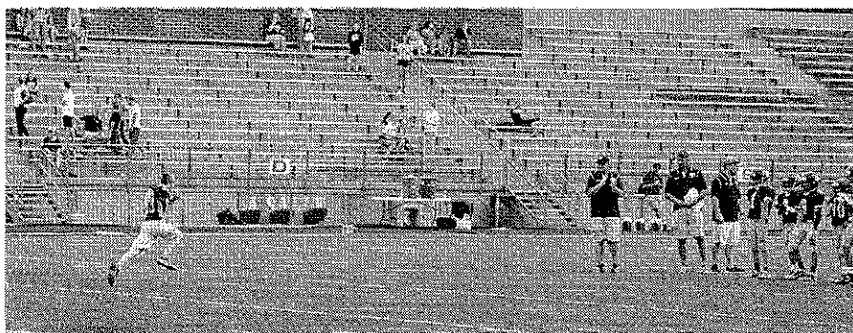
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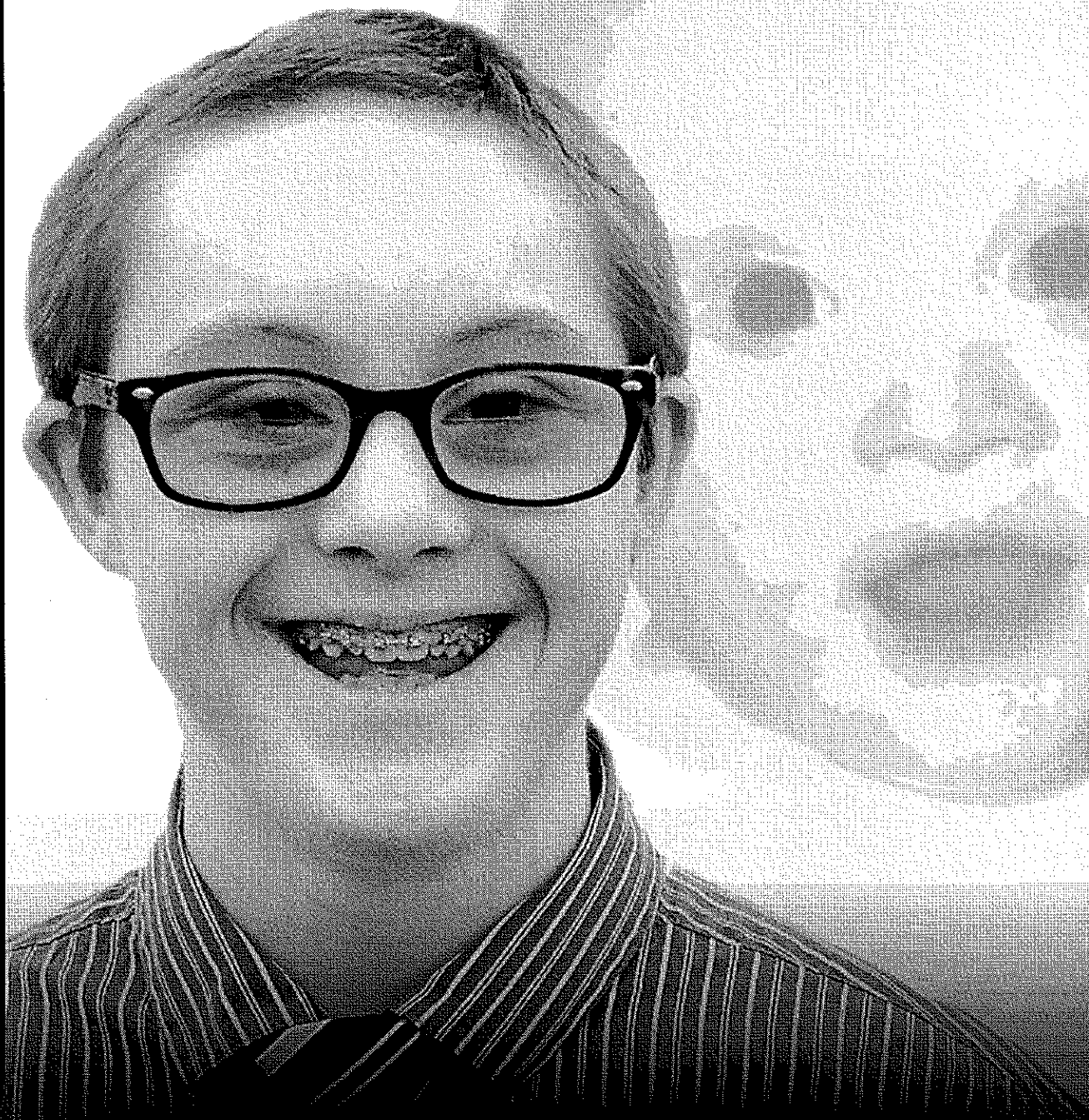
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