

Susan Gill
Senate Bill 164
Senate Health, Human Services, and Medicaid Committee
August 22, 2017

Chairman Burke, Vice Chairman Beagle, Ranking Member Tavares, and members of the committee, thank you for allowing me to testify today on behalf of Senate Bill 164. My name is Susan Gill and I am the parent of Eric Gill who was born with Down Syndrome. I am here today to speak in support of this legislation.

When I was pregnant with Eric, I of course just hoped my baby would be born healthy. Guess what, he was healthy with the exception that he had Down Syndrome. He had all his fingers and toes and all the potential that my other 3 children did. Of course things seemed scary at first, knowing his path would be a little different, but as individual as all human beings are, none of us share the exact same path through our lives.

Throughout Eric's life we have given him every opportunity to be a well-adjusted person developing and growing into a contributing citizen of the United States. I believe that was his right from the time of his conception. I believe that is the right of every pre-born person. The fact that Down Syndrome is more easily detected in utero should absolutely not be a potential death sentence. This death sentence is not based on facts or truth, but on ignorance and fear.

Let me share with you a summary of Eric's life up until now. He attended pre-school, as other children do, he attended Elementary school in regular classes with extra help, as other children do, he attended Middle school and High school in regular classes with extra help, as other children do and he graduated from Hilliard Davidson High school in 2015, as other children did.

Eric was a member of 4-H, raising rabbits, having the Best of Show Rabbit one year. He also raised a lamb, a hog, learned to sew, made a quilt and did myriad other projects. Did he need a little help? Sure, just like my other 3 kids and all the other kids in 4-H. Did he have fun, learn life-long skills and contribute to the group? Absolutely.

When Eric was 9, he joined a swim team with his older brother and went on to swim for the Hilliard YMCA and the Davidson High swim team. I felt a little bad for the "normal" kids that he beat in races. Eric's teammates adored him and he brought a sunny and positive demeanor always. He pushed himself at practices to get faster and again learned countless life-long skills during this time.

When Eric was in High school he worked in a job training program for three summers. One summer he worked at the zoo and decided that was where he wanted to work after graduation. After a year of Project Search, a fabulous work internship program based at Dublin Methodist Hospital, he attended the job interview at the zoo by himself and got the job and has worked there since the summer of 2016.

By these examples you can see that a diagnosis of Down Syndrome does not inhibit a person's potential to live a full and rewarding life in their community. Eric has experienced all the things and probably more than most young people his age.

As I said earlier, ignorance and fear are the main reasons why pre-born children are killed through abortion. I think that means that someone is not doing a good job at educating new parents about the disorder. Eliminating a population of people based on ignorance and fear is reprehensible. A so called "normal" baby can go on to develop diseases either mental or physical. Autism has far eclipsed Down Syndrome in terms of extra costs for medical and educational expenses. Are there any people with Down Syndrome caught up in our opioid epidemic? Probably not.

I truly believe in my heart and mind that Bill 164 must be passed because allowing people with Down Syndrome to be killed through abortion is indeed not only the highest form of discrimination, but the heinous practice of Eugenics and will be the catalyst to other people being eliminated through abortion based on their individual genetic make-up. That it indeed paves the way to designer children. But even those "perfect" children have the potential to develop ailments, syndromes, disorders, addictions, and diseases that make us all individual human beings.

Chairman Burke, Vice Chair Beagle, Ranking Member Tavares and members of the committee, thank you again for the opportunity to testify on Bill 164. Eric and I are happy to answer any questions you may have.