

My name is Amanda Finnefrock, I am here today in regards to Senate Bill 151. I want to thank you all for the opportunity to speak. As a prior military wife, I'd been through my husband being deployed to Afghanistan as I cared for our young daughter. We have always been very patriotic, loved our country. It was quite a challenge for us, but for both my husband and I, it pales in comparison to what we endured, and how we were violated, when an American hospital here on U.S. soil refused medical treatment for our twins when they were born prematurely. They were treated worse than you would treat your enemies. . . .

At about 20 weeks, I started getting sick with migraines and felt like I was having labor pains. I called the Riverside Methodist Hospital clinic in Columbus, Ohio, who told me this was all normal since I was pregnant with twins. However, it got much worse over the next two weeks, until Saturday morning, June 24, 2017, when I woke up in a pool of blood. I was scared and horrified. I immediately called the on-call resident at the hospital who told me to come right in.

When we got there, we went into a triage room where they brought in an ultrasound machine. When the resident was done with the ultrasound, she had a weird look on her face, then said, "They're perfectly fine. They're bouncing around." But then she directed my husband to hold my hand, and point blank told us, "They're going to die. Babies at this age don't survive."

The resident explained that I was in premature labor and that if my twins were to be born at this gestation they would be still born or only breath for a moment. The resident then went on to explain to us that I would be given a full round of steroids (in which I did complete prior to delivery) to develop their lungs. After that I was admitted to the hospital and brought into another room.

A neonatologist came in to consult with me that same day. At first, I thought he was a chaplain because he kept urging me to give my children to God, but I persisted that if my children were born alive, I wanted the hospital staff to do everything they could to keep my babies alive — full, aggressive treatment. He told me it was inhumane to try and that babies at this gestation could have severe disabilities. But these were risks as parents which we were willing to take, and that should ultimately be our decision as parents — not theirs. The doctor finally told me that if I were to make it to 22 weeks and 5 days, they would do everything that they could and that he'd be there in the room with us. I have this written assurance in my medical file.

However, he informed me that if I delivered prior to 22 weeks, 5 days gestation, there'd be "no assessment" of my boys, and that there would be no attempt to resuscitate them.

But I had the assurance of treatment if I could only make it another three days, and that is all I focused on. Still, every time a nurse or any hospital staff came into my room, I begged them to assure me that they'd treat my boys if I delivered them prior to the date, I was previously told by the neonatologist, I was desperate

The evening of June 26th 2017 my labor began. I was in tremendous pain,... yet was refused an epidural. My mom was with me, but my husband was not able to make it to the hospital in time.

Despite making it to that critical point in gestation set out by the hospital, Riverside

Methodist staff still told me as I labored that the boys were coming too early and that its neonatal intensive care unit would not attempt to aid my sons. My heart was in my stomach. It was a nightmare. I just couldn't believe it. Here I was in labor, preparing to welcome my sons, and the staff all left except for one nurse on a computer who wouldn't even look at me.

I couldn't see over my stomach, but I heard my mom gasp and through tears, I asked what was wrong, because I thought she was going to tell me he was stillborn, but instead, she said Emery had landed on the edge of the table and was "in his sac" and was moving! She ran out to the nurse's station and yelled for help. The nurse in the corner did nothing. Finally, someone else from the hospital came in, opened the amniotic sac, and then handed him to me.

I was in shock that he was alive and, in my opinion, there was no urgency from the medical staff regarding the severity of the situation at hand. Emery was perfect, just smaller. I was astonished by what I was seeing. He was moving his hands and his feet. I didn't expect that. I was caught way off guard. I began pleading with the hospital staff to treat him. I have video footage of me begging them, "Promise me you'll do something." They told me that the neonatologist was on her way in.

A neonatal nurse did come in, but just wrapped Emery in a blanket, put him under a heat lamp for a couple of minutes, and he was handed back to me to die in my arms.

Emery did not merely "breathe for a moment" as they assured me would be the case. He survived for about 45 minutes, laying in my arms as I was helpless to secure him any further care from anyone else. I was horrified as his breathing began to slow down and he began gasping for air. I pleaded even more for help, but there was just one nurse sitting in the room. I asked her, "Why are you even in here if you're not going to help?", and she replied, "I am here to call the time of death." I was both distraught and absolutely furious.

Crying, I cradled Emery in my arms with all the love I had, until he stopped breathing, and his body became lifeless and cold. The nurse confirmed his death. My mother and I continued taking turns holding him.

I asked the nurse what I could expect next. I didn't feel like I was in labor at this point. My sons were fraternal twins, so was there a possibility my body would hold off for a couple of more days? I wanted to know that Elliot might have the chance to be treated and wouldn't be left to die like Emery was.

However, a couple of hours later, I began to contract again, and I felt trapped, knowing I'd likely have the same tragic ending. This time, there were several staff members in the delivery room, including a doctor who came in and delivered Elliot, cut the cord, and laid him on my chest.

Elliot was bigger than Emery. Not only was he breathing, like Emery, but he was also kicking a lot and crying — it's even noted in my hospital records that he was crying. I was really hopeful that Elliot would get treated because he was so vibrant. However, I could see that they weren't going to treat him, so I begged them for treatment, but no one assessed his needs and just like Emery, he wasn't provided any medical care. As if I was being a burden to them, I was scolded, "Just stop and let it happen."

About 10 minutes after Elliot was born, a "cuddle cot" was brought into the room, and I asked what it was for. I was told that it was to cool him and to keep his body from decomposing. Again, I was outraged — "But he's not dead!" I exclaimed. Even still, while trying to cherish the time I had with him while he's alive, they refused to remove it from the room. Though the cuddle cot looked like a bassinet, to me, it was like bringing in a coffin as I'm holding my living baby.

Elliot lived for two and a half hours while they did nothing. His decline was different than Emery's. About 10 minutes before he passed away, Elliot began to bleed out of his ears, nose and mouth, and his body became limp. I was completely horrified and we were both left helpless to do anything.

Though I repeatedly begged the staff to help or assess my babies, I was told they were born too young. However, medical articles prove they were not born too young, though I did not have this information at the time.

After my sons passed away, I made it my personal mission to find out the truth about everything that happened that day, from the truth about statistics of survival, and what this means for other families put in my position. I want to spread awareness and create change through legislative efforts such as this to make sure that no child suffers in the manner that my sons did.

There are a few things I would like to address with you today, first of all I did in fact try to leave the hospital to be transferred to Ohio State University hospital, when the conversation took place, I was in the room with a resident from Riverside and in fact demanded the transfer take place but she automatically denied my transfer without consulting with the other physicians and OSU and proceeded to tell me no, that I was a liability. I was held at Riverside against my will and treated like a common criminal because I would not bend to them denying any kind of treatment towards my sons. I was even told that if anyone were to aid me out of the hospital there would be repercussions such as arrest. Parents everywhere in our great nation are experiencing almost identical circumstances such as mine.

These hospitals should NOT be making decisions such as these when it does not directly affect them in their everyday life. Their decision making has a terrible impact among these families such as Losing their faith in God, drug abuse, alcoholism, divorce, PTSD and even suicide. At the end of the day, they do not have to deal with the aftermath of their poor decision making. The day after my sons passed away, I found myself in a funeral home picking out caskets and viewing their body's...that was the last I saw them. A few days later when we went to bury Emery and Elliot, after their casket was lowered into the ground my husband tried handing me soil to be the first to lay them to rest and I will never forget how disgusted I felt and looked at everyone saying how wrong it was what had happened, so wrong I in fact could not stay their and watch any longer. An incredible man from the funeral home then told me that he would stay on my behalf because he understood and he would stand in my place as if they were his own, he then told me that I was a good mom as I was walking away, I then turned around and said" no I am not I failed them". I then went home to 2 of everything , went upstairs and cried myself to sleep...

What happened to me was such a horrible thing I honestly can't even put it all into words ...but what I can say is I have spent the past 4 years fighting back and I will not stop as long as this continues to happen to other families in our great state of Ohio. I am asking you to please consider this bill and take into consideration all the other families that have been affected by situations like mine....and ask yourself would you like this to happen to you or someone you love, or would you really want insurance to be the determining factor in the life or death of your child or a physician even and their opinions on how you should live your life with a child that has disabilities.... studies have shown that these children can live when given help.... studies have also shown that when no medical intervention is done, they will die.

Thank you for your time.

Amanda Finnefrock