



**STAR LEGACY**  
FOUNDATION  
Ohio Chapter

Dear Ways and Means Committee:

I was 34 weeks pregnant in November 2014. 34 weeks of my perfectly normal, low risk pregnancy had flown by. My son was just a year old and my husband Justin and I were ecstatic to be welcoming a daughter to our family in just a few short weeks.

But at my doctor's check-in that week, when my OB placed the Doppler on my large belly, we were met with silence. There is no worse sound in the world than silence where your child's heartbeat should be. We walked down the hallway to the ultrasound room to confirm the worst: At 34 weeks pregnant, my daughter's heart had stopped beating. I was forced to call my husband and shatter his world with this news. Later that evening, I was induced. While other mothers and fathers were welcoming crying, living babies, while I was in labor, I was asked questions like: do you want to cremate or bury your baby? Which funeral home do you plan to use? Do you want to do an autopsy?

If you've ever eagerly expected a child, you know these are not the plans you have made. We were forced to make all sorts of unfathomable decisions while operating in a fog of shock and grief.

On November 6th, 2014, at 12:14 pm, my daughter Lydia Joanne Welliver was born silently into this world. She was perfect, with big flipper feet, long fingers, a cute button nose, and dark hair like her Dad's. She was perfect but she was no longer alive. A small constriction in her umbilical cord that went undetected in every routine OB appointment ultimately cut off her lifeline and caused her death. We held her for six hours, reading to her, kissing her, and telling her over and over again how much we love her and how sorry we are. We only got six hours, in our whole lifetime, with our child. Then we were forced to kiss our daughter for the last time and leave the hospital without her. And as thousands of parents of stillborn children will tell you, saying goodbye was just the beginning of our painful journey.

Weeks later, after my milk had come in with no baby to feed, the hospital bills started to arrive. Those bills painful enough with a living child, but when you have no baby at home, they are heartbreaking. Add in cremation, memorial service, counseling.

The day after we returned home from the hospital, I started calling counselors. I needed to talk to someone. What I found is that very few counselors accepted my insurance, even though I carry a leading insurance. Without insurance coverage, sessions were hundreds of dollars an hour. And I needed many hours of counseling.

I ask that you support this legislation not only to alleviate the financial burden placed on families whose child dies right before birth, but most importantly, have my child recognized by the state of Ohio. My child Lydia Joanne Welliver was here. She existed, and she matters. Lydie would be three. We miss her more than words can say.

Thank you for your time,

Heather Johnston Welliver  
Ohio Chapter Chair, Star Legacy Foundation  
Lydie's Mom