

Honorable Members of the Finance Committee,

I'm writing as a mother who has gone through perinatal hospice to urge your support of SB891. A few years ago, I was lucky enough to become pregnant with our daughter, Hope. Unfortunately, at our 20 week anatomy scan, we were told that Hope had a life limiting condition. My husband and I had taken our then 12-year-old son with us to the scan to get to see his brother or sister for the first time. We sent him to the waiting room as we waited for the doctor to come back and tell us what the tech had seen on the ultrasound. The doctor confirmed that our baby girl would not survive long after birth.

At this time, she proceeded to tell us that my health was at risk if I continued the pregnancy and told us that our only option was to abort. She gave us the number of where to call and schedule a D and C. We left the appointment heartbroken and very confused. My husband and I did not get any earlier testing done because we always knew we would continue the pregnancy no matter what, but my husband was so concerned that now my health was possibly at risk. I am a NICU nurse, and I knew that this information was not true but after a doctor had told us that, it was difficult to convince my husband otherwise.

My OB at the time, never reached out to me after receiving the results of the ultrasound so I sought out a new provider. My pastor pointed me in the direction of another doctor, who shared our values. After calling to make an appointment, I received a call less than an hour later from someone with Isaiah's Promise, a support program for families carrying to term after a severe or fatal prenatal diagnosis. They informed me that Gilchrist Hospice had a perinatal department. I reached out to Gilchrist, and from then on had the support from Gilchrist Perinatal Hospice as well as Isaiah's Promise. Gilchrist assigned a nurse to me named Erin. Erin was absolutely wonderful. She would come to my house for meetings to discuss how to come up with a birth plan and what needs we could anticipate prior to and after delivery. She helped set up an interdisciplinary meeting with the hospital staff to go over our birth plan and what we wanted for our child before, during, and after delivery. Erin even set me up with a photographer from Now I Lay Me Down to Sleep, who did a pregnancy shoot with my husband and our son. The photographer also came to the hospital and took pictures on delivery day.

Once Hope was born, Erin came to help with memory making. She brought a kit to do a thumbprint to make a special necklace keepsake. She was there with us every step of the way through pregnancy and delivery. Unfortunately, Hope was born sleeping but even after Hope was born, Gilchrist would reach out to me with information for support groups. I felt very blessed to have the support of perinatal hospice throughout my journey.

As a NICU nurse, I didn't even know that perinatal hospice existed. This truly demonstrates the need for more information to be available to families in need. I think having information regarding perinatal hospice readily available on the health department website and in brochures is vital. So many families are going through this alone and do not know that this support is available to them and for their babies. For these reasons, I urge a favorable report on SB891.

Thank you,

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