

Tamara Ireland  
Biddeford  
LD 143

This testimony is written by myself, Tamara C. Ireland. I am a resident of Biddeford, Maine. My email address is tamarachristine1029@yahoo.com and my phone number is 501-350-6972. Currently I am overseas and also may be reached at +61472702596 in Australia.

This testimony is related to my support of Bill LD 143 An Act to Improve Women's Health & Economic Services by Funding Family Planning Services.

I, Tamara C. Ireland grew up in Little Rock, AR. I was privileged to attend a private Lutheran School for elementary and junior high school. Unfortunately my school didn't teach sexual education. I learned about this subject by reading Judy Blume books that my female classmates passed around. My mother never "had the talk" with me. At 16 years old I found myself pregnant from my first boyfriend. We weren't using birth control. A friend must have told me about Planned Parenthood when I realized my period was late. I went there and took a pregnancy test and it was positive. I was shocked though shouldn't have been.

I eventually told my mother and she never seemed angry, but supportive. Mind you it was 1986 and I was living in the conservative state of Arkansas in a Christian home. Things could have gone a much different way then they did. My mother borrowed money from a church friend and we never told my father. I had an abortion. I was an excellent student with a bright future ahead. My boyfriend not so much. My mother saved me from a life I wasn't ready for and one that I am 100% certain would not have turned out the way I wanted. I planned to go to college and become a nurse. Eventually that boyfriend and I broke up and I went back to Planned Parenthood to get regular GYN check ups and get on birth control.

Another family member of mine became pregnant at the age of 14 in Little Rock, AR. Her family forced her to hide her pregnancy by living in a home for unwed mothers and giving the baby up for adoption. It changed her for the rest of her life. She is 51 years old now and is scarred so deeply. I realize not every adoption situation is like this, but I truly believe things could have been much different for her. If schools in Arkansas then had comprehensive compulsory sex ed or if our parents had open conversations maybe things could have been different maybe not.

I will be forever grateful to my mother and Planned Parenthood. In May 1992 I became a nurse and in October of 1996 I became a nurse anesthetist. Part of the year I live with my Australian husband in Australia. My life would not be what it is today without a caring mother and services provided by Planned Parenthood. There are many young women I am afraid that still don't have an adult they feel they can confide in or have questions if their school does offer sex education. Planned Parenthood is vital part of healthcare for communities for a multitude of reasons. Thank you for reading my testimony for the support of Bill LD 143.

Tamara C. Ireland, ASN, BSN, M.S.