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Windham, Maine

January 10th, 2022

Good Morning Senator Claxton, Representative Meyer, and esteemed members of the committee, I urge you to vote ought to pass for LD 867

I am writing to share my experience after receiving the COVID 19 vaccine. I am a healthcare employee in southern Maine. I was on maternity leave the summer of 2021 when I received a call from my boss informing me that my employer had implemented a COVID vaccine mandate for October of 2021. I was two months post-partum when I received the call and decided it would be best to get vaccinated while I was still on maternity leave in case I experienced chills, fever, headache or any of the typical reactions that had been reported so I wouldn't need to use PTO time when I returned to work. I chose to get the COVID vaccine the day after hearing from my boss.

Within a few hours of receiving the dose I began to feel run down, tired, and sad. That evening I asked my husband if he thought I seemed depressed. He replied with a "no," and I told him that I felt very sad and I was worried that I might be feeling depressed. I will add that I have never been diagnosed with or felt myself to have any kind of depression or anxiety in my 30 plus years of life. The following day I spent the entire day laying on the couch, not because I was fatigued but because I felt almost paralyzed with anxiety and a deep sense of sadness. I had a hard time caring for my baby and trusting that I knew how to care for my baby. This feeling was unlike anything I had experienced and it terrified me.

The next three to four days were some of the toughest days in my life. I continued to feel paralyzed by anxiety. I had an intense feeling of fear and sadness that was so profound that I was barely able to move or speak. The only thing I was really able to express to my husband was "I have a sickness in my brain." I cried for several hours each day with what felt like waterfalls of tears that wouldn't stop. When I would try to shower or eat and get myself out of the slump I would have long moments of confusion about where I was and what I was doing, and it became very hard for me to trust myself to be alone with or care for my children. I had insomnia during this time, only sleeping a couple of hours each night, and when I did sleep I was tormented with horrific nightmares of my children getting the vaccine and dying, and nightmares where I was dying in very graphic manners. When I laid in bed I had thoughts about my own death. I had images that would play in my mind where I would walk off a building to end my life. I also had thoughts about driving into a tree to end my life. On several occasions I felt so ridden with guilt and sadness when I held my baby that the thought "I'd rather be dead" would go through my mind repeatedly while I cried. None of these thoughts or feelings were like anything that I had felt before. This was new to me so I would tell myself during these times that these thoughts aren't real, it's the chemicals in my brain and the vaccine effects will fade away soon.

I am lucky to have a very supportive family. My husband and Mother stepped in to help take care of my two children while I was sick. The intense side effects lasted for approximately seven days, but took more than two weeks to wear off completely. I continued to have the same nightmares about my children getting sick and dying for over a month, and I will always have a fear of taking this vaccine and going through that horrifying experience again. I worry constantly that I will be mandated to get a booster. I'm not sure that I can handle these side effects for a second time. I have confided in a few of my friends what I had gone through and had one friend share a similar experience. Her side effects of paralyzing depression only lasted a couple of days and she is choosing not to share her experience for fear of jeopardizing her job. My family and I take the recommended COVID precautions seriously. At this time we have never tested positive for COVID 19. I take several supplements to help boost my immune system, I exercise a minimum of five days a week and I have a well-balanced diet. I am not a high risk patient for COVID 19 and neither is anyone in my family. Along with sharing my story I am asking that you please give us the right to choose what is best for ourselves and our families, at least while the vaccine data is being reviewed. My children need a healthy and able mother to care for them and they do not need to see me going through what I experienced again.

Thank you,  
Lynnsey Flynn