

I became friends with Robin and Jim Utz in the early 2000s. I knew them before they knew each other, and was present at their wedding in 2010. I tried to support them through the challenges they faced with infertility, and rejoiced with them when their attempts to conceive a child came to fruition with their daughter, Grace Pearl. While on my honeymoon in November, I received a message from a mutual friend telling me the devastating news about Grace. Like everyone who knew Robin and Jim, I was utterly crushed for all of them.

Little did I know just a week or two later I would become pregnant.

On Christmas Day, 2016, I took a pregnancy test that confirmed my suspicions. I was indeed pregnant. I should have been thrilled at this news. Married; both my husband and I employed full time at jobs with gracious benefits. We own a home in a wonderful neighborhood and both have families who are supportive in every way imaginable. But in reality, I was terrified. We had not planned on this pregnancy. I am 40 years old and fully aware of the challenges I could encounter being a “geriatric pregnancy”. What if my pregnancy was affected in a similar way to Robin’s? What if we discovered that the child had a birth defect that would result in a painful existence for our child? What about a situation that put me in danger should I carry to term? I was fortunate to have the resources to put many of these fears to rest through genetic screening and ultrasounds, and I was also incredibly grateful knowing that, as a resident of St. Louis City, I had reasonable access to safely terminate my pregnancy should I need to. That is not case in any other part of the state. I am grateful that in her time of crisis, Robin had access to safely terminate her pregnancy and was not forced to carry to term a non-viable pregnancy all the while allowing her daughter to feel more and more pain. We lost Grace; we did not deserve the additional punishment of the risk of losing Robin.

I speak to you today in my 29th week of pregnancy. I feel my child moving within me. I understand the full weight of the choice I have made, and how my life is going to change. I am here to tell you: Robin and I are not statistics. We are Missouri residents, your constituents, and pro-choice advocates. We speak for all Missouri women who are entitled to receive safe health services in times of crisis, and who are entitled to the right to choose what is best for our lives without fear of punishment from employers, present or future. No woman should be discriminated against because she is pregnant, as Senate Bill 1 proposes. The bills being presented do not represent women’s best interests or take into consideration the health and well-being of mothers. Bills like Senate Bills 1, 5 and 6 seek to intimidate those most in need of services, to shame them. These bills seek to punish women while siding with organizations and corporations and place those entities outside of public accountability while allowing them to spread misinformation to the most vulnerable women in our state. I struggle with why you are choosing to introduce legislation that places corporate interests over the well being of mothers and the unborn. When you allow discrimination against their mothers, you discriminate against those unborn lives you say you are trying to protect. I hear over and over again members of Missouri’s government proclaim that they are pro-life. If you are pro-life, then introduce legislation that gives us safe options for birth control and abortion. Give us the choice to choose our own paths, what is best for us and our families. Keep us safe from those who seek to

discriminate against us, tell us lies, turn their backs on us in our time of need. Continuing to introduce these legislative measures that seek to shame and discriminate against women disproportionately is not pro-life. I ask that you reject this discriminatory legislation and start seeking ways to treat women with the compassion and respect they deserve.