

**Virginia House of Delegates
Courts of Justice - Subcommittee #4 Meeting
February 4, 2022**

Testimony of in support of HB 304
Robin Sertell, Education Coordinator
Abortion Survivors Network

Delegates, thank you permitting me to address this committee in support of HB 304, a piece of legislation that is very important to me. My name is Robin Sertell. Before I was born, I survived three abortion attempts via saline infusion. I spent most of my life believing I was the only person in the world who had ever survived an abortion attempt—let alone three. However, I was both relieved and sad to learn that I am not alone. In fact, more than thirty years ago, the Chief of Abortion Surveillance for the Centers for Disease Control stated that 400-500 live births occurred after abortion each year. This means that after 49 years of legalized abortion, there are between 19,600 and 24,500 babies that survived abortion in this country alone¹. To be blunt, there are thousands of people like me who have survived the trauma of abortion.

The fact that I was born alive after multiple failed abortion attempts doesn't imply that born alive legislation is not necessary. In fact, the reason I am here today is to use my voice and my painful experience to implore you to do everything you can to protect other abortion survivors. I encourage you to use my painful experience as a reminder of how failed abortions happen more frequently than anyone talks about, and how stories like mine and my mother's are often kept in secret and in sorrow, and that every child should be protected, regardless of whether an abortion was performed upon them or not.

This legislation addresses core and basic principles of our society. It also raises significant questions that, while uncomfortable, we must answer to understand why this is critically important. If an abortion fails, and a baby is born alive, like I was, but denied medical care—and dies-- what has happened? Is it actually a successful abortion? Or is it infanticide? Is the child an abortion survivor, yet incompatible with life? Or, what if—like the hundreds of miracle survivors I encounter, the baby is born alive. That baby has most likely already experienced significant trauma, and deserves care just like any other victim of physical and emotional trauma. Consistent and accurate reporting is critical to understand the depth and breadth of this trauma and ultimately end the cycle of violence preying upon our society².

I grapple with these questions daily as I work with the hundreds of abortions survivors who have contacted the Abortion Survivors Network for healing, support and community. As states across the nation debate whether survivors like me have the right to live, and if we do, if we have a right to medical care, more and more survivors and their families contact us for support. Their lives are much more than a choice.

This legislation gives every baby in Virginia a fighting chance. I urge the members of this committee to uphold your oath to the Constitution and the Constitution of the Commonwealth of

Virginia, which namely states the right to “the enjoyment of life and liberty... and obtaining happiness and safety.”

About Robin Sertell

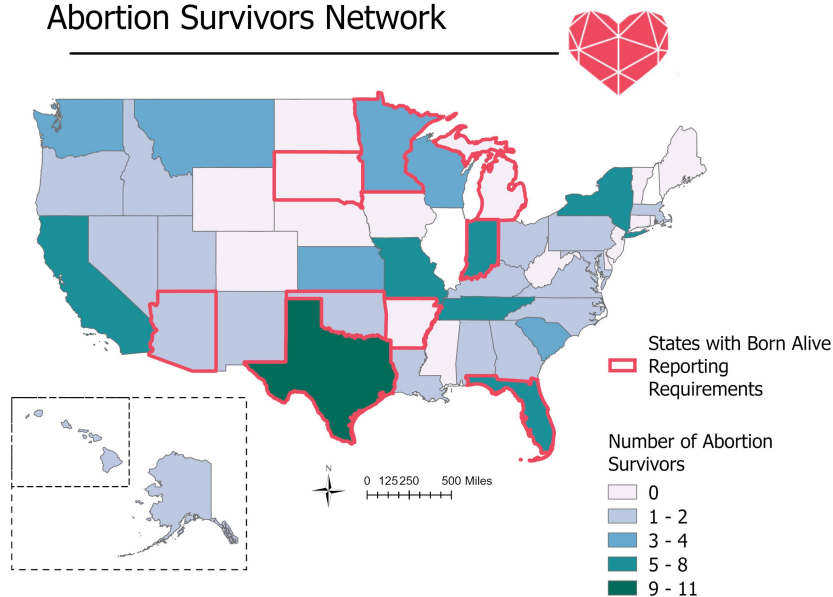
Robin Sertell is the author of “Miracles Happen in the Wilderness”, an autobiographical snapshot into her life. She is the Education Coordinator for the Abortion Survivors Network and is passionate about helping other abortion survivors heal and develop public speaking skills and amplify their voices in support of life. Robin spent most of her adult life believing she was a sole survivor of abortion attempts; she understands the incredible value of community for survivors who contact The Abortion Survivors Network.

She is gifted in equipping and empowering individuals and teams, and has established and delivered leadership materials for seminars, and staff training in a variety of team settings. These include churches, a variety of parachurch ministries, homeless shelters, schools, and a hospital.

¹ Liz Jeffries and Rick Edmonds, “Abortion: The Dreaded Complication,” Philadelphia Inquirer (Aug. 2, 1981).

² Reporting Requirements and Abortion Survivors

Survivors in Contact with the Abortion Survivors Network



Esri, Garmin, FAO, NOAA, EPA