

Petition to Congress and State Legislators

from the Ad Hoc Committee of Women Pregnant by Sexual Assault (WPSA)

We, the undersigned, having each experienced a pregnancy resulting from rape or incest, hereby petition the U.S. Congress and individual state legislatures to hold public hearings at which we and other women who have become pregnant from sexual assault will be invited to discuss our unique needs and concerns. The reasons for such hearings are set out below.

Every year, legislators, judges, and other policy makers discuss the problems of women who have become pregnant as a result of sexual assault. These discussions take place without *ever* first soliciting our input. In most cases, it is only in the context of highly divisive debates over abortion that we are discussed. In virtually every case, those people who claim to be defending our interests have never taken the time to actually listen to us to learn about our true circumstances, needs, and concerns.

We are deeply offended and dismayed each time our difficult circumstances are *exploited* for public consumption to promote the political agenda of others. This is a grave injustice. In pursuing their political agendas, these exploiters have reduced our concerns, needs, and circumstances to a crude caricature.

Those who claim to represent our interests have never sought our authorization to represent us. They do not know us, understand us, or truly care about us. Just as we were once used, without our consent, to gratify the sexual desires of others, so we continue to be used, without our consent, to gratify the political goals of others.

Only *we* who have actually experienced a sexual assault pregnancy truly understand the trauma, fears, concerns, and needs of our sisters who are, or will someday become, pregnant as a result of rape or incest.

Each year, thousands of women will face this experience. Unless society at large begins to *listen to us today*, these other women will, like us, face great difficulty in finding authentic understanding and help.

The issue of sexual assault pregnancies is both delicate and complicated. Even women who have been sexually assaulted but did not become pregnant can only speak in terms of their own fears rather than their actual experience. Only women who were

or are pregnant by sexual assault can knowledgeably testify about this experience.

Our experiences are varied. Many of us carried our pregnancies to term. Some of us raised or are raising our children, while others placed our children in adoptive homes. Others of us had abortions. In many cases, we felt pressured to abort by family members, social workers, and doctors who insisted that abortion was the “best” solution. For many the abortion caused physical and emotional trauma equal to or exceeding the trauma of the sexual assault that our abortions were supposed to “cure.”

We are the only ones who can bear witness to our real experiences and our real needs. How long will you refuse to listen to us?

Signatories:

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|----------------------------|----------------------------|
| 1. Arlene Anzalone (MI) | 17. Patricia Storms (CA) |
| 2. Eleanor Attonito (NJ) | 18. Rebecca Underwood (MD) |
| 3. Diana Conley (OH) | 19. Kay Zibolsky (WI) |
| 4. Sue B. Evans (LA) | 20. Dana (CA) |
| 5. Heather Gemmen (CO) | 21. Diane (RI) |
| 6. Virginia Greene (AL) | 22. Gloriann (CA) |
| 7. Shea Hart (SC) | 23. Helene (IL) |
| 8. Jeanette Himko (PA) | 24. Janet (AZ) |
| 9. Sarah Hoover (HI) | 25. Lisa (CA) |
| 10. Mary V. Hopkins (MI) | 26. Marie (CA) |
| 11. Dorcas O. King (WY) | 27. Maura (WA) |
| 12. Suzanne L. Maurer (HI) | 28. Ruby (BC) |
| 13. Laurie McDevitt (IL) | 29. Shirley (CO) |
| 14. Susan Renne (TX) | 30. Jane Doe # 1 (OH) |
| 15. Louise Simmons (VA) | 31. Jane Doe #2 (KS) |
| 16. Cynthia Speltz (MN) | 32. Jane Doe #3 (OH) |

There are three levels of signatories to this document: **public** (willing to publicly testify or be interviewed using their true identities, and identified with their full names); **semi-private** (willing to testify or be interviewed under various terms, possibly with a requirement for anonymity, and identified by first name only); and **anonymous** (identified as a “Jane Doe”) due to personal or familial concerns that require privacy).

The actual signatures are on file. Contact, upon authorized agreement, may be initiated through the Elliot Institute, (217) 525-8202.

For more information about WPSA or signing the petition, call 1-888-412-2676.