

## **Testimony**

Chairwoman Murray, members of the committee, thank you for inviting me to speak with you today.

My name is Samie Detzer, and I have two stories to share.

The first is fairly simple.

On May 20, 2015, in Seattle, I had an abortion.

At 25 years old, I was pregnant and did not want to be.

It took me five minutes to schedule my abortion, which was covered by Washington state's Apple Health program. I received compassionate, expert care from the providers at Planned Parenthood in my own city and state.

My abortion was not painful. It was certainly not traumatic. I was not lonely, or depressed, or ashamed. I can remember more about laughter than tears, more about freedom than my pain. I have not wondered what my life would be like now if I had a child. I have never once agonized over the decision.

That is my story, and it is mine alone. No one interfered to stop me from making the best decision for myself. No one tried to take control of what was mine — my body, my freedom, my choice.

The second story is my mother's.

She was 19, and living in San Francisco with my father, when she got pregnant. They were both using drugs, and were not ready to be the exceptional parents they would later become.

It was 1968, before the Supreme Court's decision in Roe v. Wade guaranteed the constitutional right to abortion.

Her doctor informed her that the only way to receive a legal abortion in the United States was to have a team of psychotherapists deem her mentally unfit for parenthood.

She agreed to this process, was three times called officially crazy, as she told me, and was granted the right to have a legal abortion. It took just shy of 20 weeks to navigate the process.

She received her legal abortion, finally, at five months pregnant. Unlike my experience, my mother's procedure was needlessly painful, and physically and emotionally traumatic for her.

My mother was open with her three children about her experience, but I don't know everything about it. I don't know how in the world, living across the country from her family and hiding her pregnancy from them, she was able to scrape together the money for three therapists and the abortion itself. I don't know what it was like for her to carry a pregnancy she did not want for five full months, to endure comments from strangers as she began to show. I don't know exactly the judgment and shame she was subjected to because the law did not honor her right to control her body. And unfortunately I can't ask her, because she passed away four years ago.

I miss my mother every day, but I'm glad she isn't here to see this terrible moment in our country's history. I do wish she had a chance to meet her granddaughter, my niece Sadie, who is two years old — and will grow up with fewer rights than I had.

I am here today, telling these two stories, because of the dual responsibility I feel to honor both my mother, and my little niece. The responsibility I feel to honor the past and fight for a better future.

The members of this committee, the members of this Senate, have a choice.

The choice lawmakers have is how difficult you make it for us to exercise our freedom — how much pain and trauma you cause, how many bank accounts will be drained, how many miles have to be traveled, and how many tears will be shed.

Lawmakers can decide if people in this country will be able to get the health care they deserve. Lawmakers will decide if states will be allowed to create insurmountable barriers to abortion or ban it completely. Lawmakers will decide whether our country will look like my mother's story, or like mine.

What they cannot do is take away our freedom to own our own bodies. No judge or justice can take away my right to decide what is best for me, my body, and my future. That freedom is ours, and we do not surrender it.

I hope, for the sake of my mother's memory, and for my niece's future, you will make the right choice, senators. People who want abortions or have had abortions need to know that they aren't alone, that you will continue to fight for us. I hope that you will choose to be brave along with those of us who are telling our stories, use every tool you have to protect our right to abortion care and reproductive freedom.