

JOINT
SENATE HEALTH & WELFARE COMMITTEE
AND
HOUSE HEALTH & WELFARE COMMITTEE
Friday, February 12, 2016

ATTACHMENT 19

02/12/16
Mariah Walton

Mariah Walton Testimony

Feb. 11, 2016

I was born with a hole in my heart that could have been easily fixed right then But I was born at home to parents who didn't believe in using doctors, and throughout my childhood they ignored daily, obvious signs that something was seriously wrong.

I had a hard time breathing. I would turn blue and pass out frequently. I coughed non-stop. I had little energy and was sometimes foggy-headed. I begged and begged to be taken to a doctor but never was. The day I turned eighteen I went on my own, and it was a scary thing to see doctors with alarmed looks making phone calls to get me more serious help.

Help was hard to get, too, because I had no birth certificate, no Social Security, nothing - because my parents didn't believe in that either. Or in sending me to school. I've never been.

I ended up in Spokane, then Boise, then Salt Lake City where teams of cardiologists, pulmonologists - and more - ran tests and experimented with medicines to keep me alive - I was that close. In Boise, there was a period where I was on full life support for eleven days and the family was called to come to say goodbye to me. I was airlifted to Salt Lake where it was touch and go for a month after that.

Today, life is pretty hard. I'm on full time oxygen and a medication line into my chest that is painful. I have little energy and I can never be alone - never - and one of my sisters, Eliza, is my fulltime caregiver. If the doctors can get me to grow stronger, I'll be eligible for a heart-lung transplant, which I will need to survive.

As you can imagine I am angry and upset at how I was neglected. I wouldn't want anyone to have to go through what I am enduring. I feel it is not okay for people to be allowed to ignore modern science that saves lives. I had no vote and no power over my parents and they were legally allowed to let me get to this point.

It's just wrong. You only need to look at me to see that. Thank you for listening.