

Contributors

I'm a mom who had an abortion. I know I made the most compassionate choice.



George Danby | BDN

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Being a mother means you do everything in your power to protect your children and create the best possible life for them. As someone who had the misfortune of being pregnant with a very sick baby, twice, this meant making the difficult decision to end a very wanted pregnancy, twice.

Both times I had access to safe and legal abortions. The pain of these losses has not left me, but has become bearable. With the very real possibility of **Roe v. Wade** being overturned if **Brett Kavanaugh is confirmed to the U.S. Supreme Court**, I am forced to consider what could have happened if my husband and I were not allowed to make the right choice for our family.

Five years ago, my husband and I were overjoyed to learn we were expecting a baby. We made it through the first trimester and were excited to see the baby at our 13-week ultrasound. Though we are both health care professionals, we were not prepared for the devastating image of a fetus with a massive cyst on her neck. If she did survive to birth, her life would be short and painful.

We consulted with maternal-fetal specialists and genetic counselors, and decided to end the pregnancy. As her mother, I knew I made the most compassionate choice for my daughter.

[Opinion: I chose not to have an abortion, but I'm glad I was counseled on the option]

Several months later, I was thrilled to be pregnant again. This time the 13-week ultrasound revealed we were expecting twins, so we began to prepare for life with two newborns. We were cautiously optimistic as the technician began the 20-week anatomy scan. When the technician's face went blank and she said she was going to run something by the doctor, we panicked — we knew what this meant.

I howled and writhed when the doctor said, "I'm so sorry, but one of the twins has a large opening at the bottom of her spine, a neural tube defect. It looks like she has spina bifida." They showed us the bubble at her spine that should have been flat; they showed us her misshapen skull.

A fetal MRI showed that Twin B had severe spina bifida. She would require a shunt in her skull at birth, never be able to walk, require a colostomy bag and have other health and developmental issues. Twin A, though, was perfectly healthy.

We thought about what Twin B's life would be like. We thought about what Twin A's life would be like. We thought about what our family's life would be like. Again, we made the compassionate choice and reduced the pregnancy.

Two days later, my husband and I clenched hands as a team of caring nurses and doctors used ultrasound to guide a lethal injection into Twin B's heart. After confirming that Twin B no longer had a heartbeat but Twin A did, I was sent home with just a bandage. We passed the next critical two weeks anxiously

waiting to see if Twin A would miscarry as a result of the procedure. She survived, and months later, our precious healthy Rose was born.

After adjusting to new motherhood and surviving postpartum depression, we decided to have another baby. That pregnancy was smooth and normal. Pearl is now a delightfully rowdy toddler, keeping pace with her doting older sister. While I experience the pleasure and challenges of parenting these two girls, I am aware every day of my other two girls who are not with us. As their mother, I know I made the best possible choice for all of my daughters.

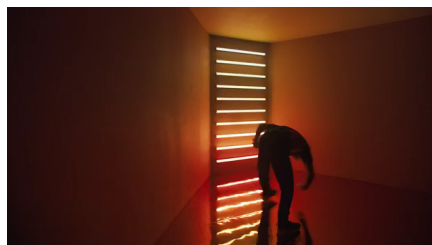
[Opinion: Women need Susan Collins to stand up for their reproductive rights]

We can never know for certain what choices we'll face in the future. Someday, a woman you know may need an abortion — to save her own life, spare her children pain or determine her own future. Maine's women and families need leaders who understand it isn't their place to play judge and jury for women. Ensuring every woman has access to family planning services requires every U.S. senator, and especially **Susan Collins**, to stand up and vote no on Kavanaugh's nomination. We cannot have another Supreme Court justice who **doesn't respect women and our right to be in control of our lives.**

I hope Rose and Pearl never face what their father and I had to. I wish for them to have healthy, planned pregnancies. But if they don't, what I want most for them is choice. I want a world for them where they can create families on their own terms and have full agency over their lives.

With the very real threat of a Justice Kavanaugh my hope for their future is in jeopardy. Senators now hold the keys to women's — to my daughters' — fundamental freedoms in their hands.

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