

Dear Committee Persons;

My name is Tashina Byrd. I would have liked to deliver my story in person, unfortunately that is not possible. Today you are being presented with the Ohio Prevention First Act, so I am obliged to share my story, and how such an act would have aided me in my time of trial, and hopefully will aid countless Ohio women in their time of strife.

In January of 2007, a very personal problem for me caused me to be the source of ridicule at the hands of the person whose only job was to hand me a pill. That morning I walked into the Wal-Mart on Bechtle Ave in Springfield, Ohio to ask for the Plan B pill. My husband, then fiancé, Brian, was in the store, but I walked to the pharmacy counter on my own. I spoke to a pharmacy technician and asked for the Plan B pill. I watched across the long open counter as the technician approached pharmacist Brent Beams, a name I will never forget. I watched as Mr. Beams shook his head and laughed. I listened as the technician informed me while they had the medication; he could not give it to me, and Mr. Beams would not allow anyone to give it to me.

Mr. Beams was not my doctor. Mr. Beams was not informing me as to possible side effects or drug interactions, Mr. Beams was abusing his position to stand directly between myself and my family planning. The humiliation I suffered at his hands is still with me to this day. No woman should ever be put into the position of feeling such shame and such degradation simply because her birth control failed.

Plan B is not an abortion, as Mr. Beams seems to have thought, as quoted in the past. Plan B is a preventative option designed to keep a woman from having to undergo an operation or a birth she isn't prepared for and possibly can't afford. A woman's choice in birth control is an intensely personal decision. It is also a decision that is argued day after day on the world's stage, and women do have the ability to pay attention to that argument and make their own decisions, without having those decisions made for them by people who aren't qualified to make them.

Plan B provided me a backup route so even though my Plan A failed, I still had an option to be responsible and no pharmacist should have the right to deny a woman the right to be responsible. They won't pay for her decisions, they don't have the right to stand in the way.

I don't know what happened to Brent Beams, but I do know that I live with the humiliation he put me through, and I do know that it isn't fair or right that anyone should have the option to dole out judgment instead of doing their job.

I hope it's understood this letter was difficult for me to write. I had no desire to open up this part of my life again. However, in the interest of the women of Ohio, I revisit it, and urge you to do your part to make sure every woman has access to preventative measures and family planning. It is a sure way to work toward against lower abortion rates and lower unplanned pregnancy rates, which in the end is what everyone wants.

Sincerely,

Tashina L. Byrd-O'Neill