

February 18, 2021

I am Rachel Cheek, a CNM, living and working in Wichita Kansas. Stacey Eason asked me to submit a written testimony to this address.

I graduated from Frontier Nursing University with my Master's degree in Nursing several years ago, fully aware of the prejudice environment of Wichita. At that time, there was an Advanced Practice Registered Nurse Midwife practicing with hospital privileges. I was hopeful of finding a full scope position and affecting change. I knew I could get another job out of state but did not want to leave Kansas. Wichita is my home and I care deeply about the people here. I found a job with HealthCore Clinic, a FQHC in Wichita, providing prenatal, postpartum and gynecologic care. HealthCore provides healthcare to a diverse population of under-insured individuals, many of whom don't have access to healthcare anywhere else. I am passionate about providing quality care to vulnerable populations. These are the women who need it most. Wichita has one of the highest black infant mortality rates in the country and HealthCore is located in one of the zipcodes where this rate is the highest. It provides critical care to very vulnerable people. Many of these women have been badly abused by the system and taught not to trust healthcare providers. I worked hard to gain their trust and give them the care they deserved.

However, because of the limitations of APRN practice and subsequent limitations of malpractice coverage, at HealthCore I have to discontinue prenatal care at 28 weeks and transfer patients to another clinic for the remainder of their pregnancy. This transfer is deeply disruptive to the patient's healthcare. The third trimester is a critical time in pregnancy and trying to re-establish care during that time is difficult and potentially dangerous. It is providing yet another barrier to these women getting quality care for themselves and their babies.

I was asked every day if I could be present for the birth of the baby. It was so hard to explain that while I have the skills, knowledge, and license to help them, I could not because of 'paperwork.' Research has shown quality prenatal care is critical to preventing fetal and maternal deaths. I have the education, capacity, and passion to provide this vital care but am limited by these requirements. If we truly care for the under-served of Kansas, we should be working to equip and empower our healthcare providers to increase access, not handcuffing their practice because of standards based in prejudice and misunderstanding.

Hopefully this is helpful

Thanks