

Dear Senator White,

Good Evening, I hope this finds you well. It was such a pleasure meeting you yesterday and having the chance to talk to you. Thank you so much for taking time out of your busy schedule to come and talk to us.

I'm writing in support of a FY25 budget request from Empty Arms Vermont (under VDH's Family & Child Health Division) that focuses on strengthening peer support for pregnancy and infant loss. This issue is important to me because I suffered a miscarriage and I didn't have the support that I needed to get through it. I can't remember a time when I haven't wanted to be a mom and I always thought that I would have a house full of kids but, that isn't the case because when my husband and I started to try for a family we found out that I have endometriosis. That ugly word infertility became apart of my everyday vocabulary. We decided to go the route of IVF. IVF in itself is extremely emotional there is so much hope, love, and yes disappointment and sadness that goes along with it, its an emotional roller coaster. As someone who so strongly desired to be a Mom every milestone with IVF was a big deal. We got three embryos or as I called them "embabies". We decided to put two of them in to start. I received an ultra sound with my two growing "embabies", I imagined their life and what they would look like. I grew a strong bond with them immediately. On June 3, 2017, I found out that I had lost them. The fertility clinic did not offer any support and I was devastated. I didn't know where to turn. About a year later we transferred our frozen embryo and I gave birth to a beautiful baby girl, who just turned 5 and is love of our life. I struggled with anxiety through out my entire pregnancy. I constantly feel like someone is missing. Unfortunately, because I wasn't given the support that I need at the time of my miscarriage I fit most of the statistics of someone who has suffered a miscarriage; I suffer from PTSD and anxiety. I am just now getting the help that I need and should have received back when I had my miscarriage. Empty Arms needs this funding so that they can spread the word to doctor's offices, hospitals, and most importantly fertility clinics. They are a huge asset to our state and to the mental health and trauma community.

The budget request is for one-time funding of \$40,000. This request was given the highest priority recommendation by the House Human Services Committee and supported by many House members. The issue of pregnancy and infant loss, and its mental health and physical trauma consequences, is repeatedly an overlooked issue and we need the voice of legislators to help us change this. I'm writing to ask you to please ask Appropriations to support this budget request in the FY25 budget.

Please let me know if you need me to pass my statement on to any other Senators or if you need anything else from me. Thank you for your support in this budget request.

Thank you for all you do,
Betsy Avery