

STATEMENT OF SCIENTISTS, MEDICAL AND MENTAL HEALTH PROFESSIONALS ABOUT ABORTION'S EFFECT ON WOMEN

The United States Supreme Court stated in *Gonzales v. Carhart* that “it is unexceptionable that some women will come to regret their choice to abort the infant life they once created and sustained ... severe depression and loss of esteem can follow.” Abortion is a difficult and complex decision, because it has deep impact upon the woman, her own mental health and well-being, her physical health and well-being, her relationship with the child in utero, her relationship with her husband and/or relationship with her sexual partner, other family members, as well as society as a whole.

As a scientist, medical professional or mental health professional, I agree with the following conclusions about abortion:

THE FACTS

- 1) It is common for women to experience feelings of anger, fear, sadness, anxiety, grief, or guilt after abortion. The United States Supreme Court is correct that “some women come to regret their choice to abort the infant life they once created and sustained... Severe depression and loss of esteem can follow.”¹
- 2) Women’s reaction to these feelings vary considerably with their emotional coping abilities and pre-existing functioning. It is undeniable that significant numbers of women are injured by abortion and should not be ignored by the medical profession and that significant numbers of women suffer serious physical, mental or psychological trauma as a result of abortion.
- 3) The conclusion that there is a causal connection between abortion and negative problems is supported by three independent lines of evidence: (a) the self-attribution of women themselves, (b) mental health professionals who have successfully diagnosed and treated post-abortion reactions, and (c) statistically validated studies controlling for a large number of confounding factors which have been published in peer reviewed journals.
- 4) There is a significant body of research which demonstrates that abortion has harmful consequences for women. There is definite scientific evidence that supports this claim. The best scientific evidence to date suggests that a significant number of women who elect to abort suffer serious and enduring symptoms of anxiety, depression, trauma, suicidal behaviors, sleep disorders, and substance abuse disorders. This evidence must not be suppressed for any reason and should be provided to women as part of the abortion informed consent process. Peer reviewed research has shown that abortion is statistically associated with adverse mental health outcomes compared to women who have not elected abortion.

SIGNED BY:

**Marcia Albrecht, MA Counseling,
Marcus W. Allen, Licensed Mental Health Counselor, Licensed Marriage & Family
Therapist, Certified Clinical Mental Health Counselor
Dr. Daniel Amen, Medical Doctor
Constance Austin, Licensed Professional Counselor
Elizabeth Barnett, Licensed Associate Counselor**

Kathleen Basehore, Master Arts in Psychology, Licensed Psychologist
Frank Basley, Licensed Associate Professional Counselor
Susan K. Beeney, Registered Nurse and Grief Counselor
Dr. Karl Benzio, Psychiatrist, M.D.
Kay Bleyer, Licensed Mental Health Counselor
Tonya Bonner, Master of Education, Licensed Professional Counselor
Joan M. Bosky, Marriage & Family Therapist
Mark Bowman, Licensed Professional Counselor
Linda P. Bowman, Licensed Graduate Social Worker
Dianna Bradley, Education Masters in Community Counseling
James Scott Branan, Licensed Mental Health Counselor
Robert Broadwell, Master of Arts, Licensed Professional Counselor
Lya Burgess, Licensed Master of Social Work, Independent Clinical Social Worker
Jessica Campbell, Licensed Professional Clinical Counselor
Sharon Carl, Licensed Clinical Social Worker
Kay Lyn Carlson, Licensed Master Social Worker
Susan Cerni, Licensed Mental Health Counselor
Billie N. Coey, Licensed Professional Clinical Counselor, Licensed Marriage & Family Therapist, Licensed Master of Social Work
Kathy Connolly, Licensed Independent Clinical Social Worker
Shelli Cossel, Masters Level Licensed Professional Counselor
Ginean Giannrea Crawford, Licensed Professional Counselor, MasterS in Family Therapy
Robert Crawford, Professional Counselor, National Certified Counselor, Diplomate, American Association of Experts in Traumatic Stress
Marla Delong, Licensed Marriage & Family Therapist
Susan Dardarian, M.M.C.C.
Marina Ervin, M.S., Licensed Professional Counselor, National Certified Counselor
Susan Faurce, Licensed Mental Health Counselor
Stephanie Fedler, Licensed Psychologist
Amy Frady, Licensed Professional Counselor, National Certified Counselor
John Charles Franklin, Master of Science in Counseling, Master Level Addictions Professional
Bertine C. Galipeau, Licensed Ed. Psychologist
Allene E. Geary, Registered Nurse, BSN, Master Health Ed.
Kathy Giangrande, Licensed Mental Health Counselor
Eve Marie Gilbert, Master of Arts, Nationally Board Certified Licensed Professional Counselor
Joyce D. Goodwin, Licensed Professional Counselor
Denise L. Greenhalgh, Licensed Clinical Social Worker
Chaua Hall, Bachelor of Science in Nursing
Stephanie Hamand, Master of Arts, Licensed Professional Counselor, National Certified Counselor
Matt Hartell, Licensed Mental Health Counselor
James J. Heid, Medical Doctor
Lisa Hosale, Licensed Master of Social Work
Theresa Huggins, State Licensed Counselor
Joyce N. Inskip, Licensed Clinical Social Worker, Licensed Probation Officer in Indiana
Peggy Jackson, Licensed Clinical Social Worker
Jay Jeffers, Licensed Psychologist
Karen Jones, Alpha Pregnancy Center
Janize King, Licensed Mental Health Counselor

Sidney W. Langston, Psychiatric Clinical Nurse Specialist
Jeff Lee, Licensed Professional Counselor
Gabriel Nicholas Lett, Master of Arts in Professional Counseling, Licensed Professional Counselor
Karen Ludwig, National Certified Counselor, Licensed Professional Counselor
Violet J. McCreary, Registered Nurse
Kay B. McGovern, Licensed Clinical Social Worker
Cindy Meeks, Licensed Clinical Psychologist
Randolph Meralits, Licensed Professional Counselor
Berl Miller, Licensed Clinical Social Worker
Susan Moffitt, Masters of Science in Counseling Psychology
Fran Mora, Licensed Clinical Social Worker
Jerold Nelson, Licensed Independent Clinical Social Worker
Jovani O'Grady, Bachelor's Behavioral Science/Psychology
Brenda R. Ohursted, Licensed Independent Social Worker
Linda P. Orner, Licensed Professional Counselor
Cindy Peterson, B.A. Sociology M.A. Christian Counseling
Glenda Plummer, Provisionally Licensed Professional Counselor
Larry E. Quicksall, Licensed Clinical Social Worker
Donna Rand, Registered Nurse/Mental Health
Gina Roes, Licensed Professional Counselor, Specialty of Women's Issues
Jeanen Sabo, Registered Nurse, Licensed Professional Counselor
Kathren Salmi, Licensed Professional Counselor, Advanced Addictions Counselor
Jacqueline Smith, Ph. D., Licensed Professional Clinical Counselor
Rick Sonale, Licensed Marriage and Family Therapist
Cynthia W. Starling, Masters of Social Work, Licensed Clinical Social Worker
Daniel S. Sweeney, Licensed Professional Counselor, Licensed Marriage & Family Therapist
Victor Tarassou, Doctorate, Masters
Judith L. Thompson, Family & Marriage Therapist
David V. Tosi, Masters in Theology
Joyce Waite, Licensed Masters Social Worker, American Certified Social Worker
David S. Weiss, Master of Arts, Counseling and Psychology
Dan J. Wilford, Licensed Professional Counselor
Dorothy Wills, Licensed Professional Counselor, Registered Nurse
Tina Yeager, Licensed Mental Health Counselor
Jennifer Robinson, Licensed Psychologist
Lee Brandt, Doctor of Philosophy in Counseling
Russell Suda, Medical Doctor
James J. Heid, Medical Doctor
Bonnie Lee Bryant, Psychologist & Marriage Therapist
Angel Eidschun, Licensed Professional Counselor, Certified Trauma Resolution Therapist
Chauna Hall, Psychiatric Nurse
Jill Pinder, Licensed Social Worker
Jennifer Robinson, Licensed Psychologist
Sonya T. Taylor, Licensed Clinical Social Worker
Gretchen H. Boyd, Licensed Professor Counselor, Licensed Marriage & Family Counselor
James G. Linn, Obstetrician/Gynecologist, Board Certified, Professor of Obstetrics & Gynecology
Larry S. Thornburg, Professional Master of Science

- 1 Opinion of United States Supreme Court in *Gonzalez v. Carhart*, upholding the federal ban on partial birth abortion, citing The Justice Foundation Amicus Brief on behalf of Sandra Cano (the “Doe”) of *Doe v. Bolton* which created the abortion “health exception” and 180 Women Hurt By Abortion.
- 2 Coleman, P. K., Reardon, D. C., Rue, V., & Cogle, J. (2002). **State-funded abortions vs. deliveries: A comparison of outpatient mental health claims over four years.** *American Journal of Orthopsychiatry*, 72, 141-152. Reardon, D. C., Cogle, J., Rue, V. M., Shuping, M., Coleman, P. K., & Ney, P. G. (2003). **Psychiatric admissions of low-income women following abortion and childbirth.** *Canadian Medical Association Journal*, 168, 1253-1256.
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