

Kate Frederick Remarks for Young Rally
December 3, 2014

Yikes, I've never been to a rally before, let alone speak at one in front of the Supreme Court.

But I'm here today from the White Mountains of New Hampshire, on behalf of my family and of the Unitarian Universalist Association, to #Stand With Peggy by sharing my personal story.

“For more than 50 years, the Unitarian Universalist Association has been advocating for the full possible spectrum of pregnancy and parenting options, including abortion, parental leave, and other workplace fairness policies. We believe that every person possesses dignity and a conscience. Every person should have the right and ability to enact these sacred decisions about parenting, in consultation with her doctor, her family, and her faith.”

Breathe.

Peggy, I haven't met you yet, but I have been following your story and I want you to know that the *incredible* stress that you and your family have been going through in pursuing justice is paving the way for me and my family and we thank you.

Before I tell my story, I need to warn you. If you're like most people, your reaction to hearing the nitty gritty details of my experience, might be to laugh out loud. Go ahead. And you might even think my story was written by Jon Stewart for the Daily Show to make an entertaining political statement. But it wasn't. I wrote this speech, sitting behind a baby gate on the floor of my kitchen, while I had some chicken nuggets in the oven for Devon's dinner.

- In 2012, during the third trimester of my pregnancy, I was diagnosed with anemia and Insulin Dependent Gestational Diabetes.
- At the time I working at the New Hampshire - Department of Health and Human Services as Child Support Officer.
- My duties were to collect court ordered child support payments and put non-payors in jail if necessary.
- I took pride in my work as a public servant and a job well done that benefits children
- My job would have also provided health insurance for my whole family
- My pregnancy was an especially high risk one, and the last thing I wanted was to lose my income and health insurance.

- Unfortunately, my boss didn't believe in my medical symptoms and increased my workload, while criticizing me and threatening my job security.
- She took away my training notes and wouldn't let me keep a work log, to track the 700 cases assigned to me
- I tried to work things out with her, but our meetings ended up with me in tears and my blood sugar levels crashing.
- I reported my Supervisor for Pregnancy Discrimination and requested reasonable accommodations
- Soon after, I went on unpaid family leave and gave birth to my son Devon.
- Devon is now a happy healthy nursing toddler who likes to climb rocks, go sledding and snowshoe.
- At 2.5 months old, Devon hadn't developed the oral muscle strength yet to drink from a bottle and had to be breastfed
- I requested reasonable accommodations to breastfeed him during the work day, along with notes from my medical care providers
- My employer had a Lactation Room, but wouldn't let me breastfeed in it.
- My requests to leave on unpaid break time to breastfeed Devon at his daycare just across the street were denied
- I asked to use my remaining FMLA leave to breastfeed Devon - also denied
- I was fired, while my boss was promoted

My husband Brad and I decided together, we had to do whatever was in our power to fight this and I am currently suing my former employer. This is the first time I've spoken publicly since I filed my federal lawsuit. I've avoided interviews and have been trying to maintain privacy and normalcy for my family, but Brad and I both felt compelled for me to speak now, in the hopes that the Supreme Court will decide in favor of Peggy.

Brad, I need to thank you first and foremost, for your hardwork to keep us afloat and for being like minded to fight this. Oh and for taking care of Devon today. If you hadn't wanted to go down this path with me, I know I couldn't have done it alone, as a first time new mom. I also am grateful to both of our parents for being in our corner and supporting us while we pursue legal justice. Lastly, I want to acknowledge the many silent families who don't have the time, luxury or resources to take their battle public, who have also experienced discrimination. I am so thankful to the New Hampshire Unitarian Universalists who have supported us with donations when we really needed it.

Today, I say a prayer for Peggy that the road to justice will indeed rise to meet her and hope that the Supreme Court decides to stand with her as well.

Thank you.