

TESTIMONY OF
AARONETTE NOBLE
MOTHER IN RECOVERY
FROM METHAMPHETAMINE ADDICTION

**COMMITTEE HEARING: THE SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC EFFECTS OF THE METHAMPHETAMINE
EPIDEMIC ON AMERICAS' CHILD WELFARE SYSTEM**

COMMITTEE ON FINANCE
U.S. SENATE
WASHINGTON, DC

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Good morning Senators. Thank you for the honor of speaking to you today. My name is Aaronette Noble. I am here with my husband and my son Joey. I am a wife, a mother, and I am a recovering addict.

I grew up in an alcoholic home. I smoked marijuana for the first time at the age of 7. I first drank alcohol at the age of 14 and I began using cocaine and methamphetamine at the ripe age of 17. No one plans to have the disease of addiction take over their lives and no one plans to end up in prison for methamphetamine abuse. No one plans to give birth to a tiny baby born with drugs in their system. No one plans to have their children tell them they don't want to have anything to do with their mother. No one plans for these things, I know I didn't.

When I was using meth, I felt dead most of the time. All I did was breathe in and breathe out. I had no motivation. The world was a very dark place. I had no hope or no faith in anything or anyone. Everyday I would wonder why I didn't just die. I was so angry at God, at the world and mostly at myself. My teeth and my hair were falling out and other people had custody of my children. My husband and I were homeless and sleeping in our car.

Did I believe that family treatment could help me, with all that was wrong in our lives, how could it? I had tried single adult programs but I never succeeded in staying clean. The programs were very short-term, they were only 90 days at most. I was not helped as a mother who had this shame and guilt because of my addiction. My children were not provided services. We could not heal together as a family.

After years of prison and inappropriate single adult treatment programs, my addiction to meth got worse. I gave birth to a daughter born addicted to meth. She was removed from my custody by child welfare. At that point, however, a miracle happened. My children and I were referred to a comprehensive family treatment program. We entered into Bridgeway Counseling and the Division of Family Services. My husband had made a commitment to do the same. Bridgeway had just opened a Men's Residential Center next to the Women's Center. We were the first married couple to be in treatment at the same time. It helped to know that we were doing this apart, but also together. Our addiction tore our family apart, so we needed to find our solution as a family. I received services I didn't even know I needed. I saw a psychiatrist who helped with my depression and I could sleep better and think more clearly, it was like someone turned on the light in my head and my mind wasn't constantly racing.

At Bridgeway, we started family therapy. I got counseling for domestic violence and for sexual abuse. I didn't even think I had issues in these areas until I finally opened up to my counselors and was truthful with myself. We took parenting classes, went to meetings and attended Church. The Division of Family Services brought our baby to Bridgeway for Darren and me to see her. She's a beautiful little girl with big blue eyes and she can see right through you. I want her only to see good things in me today, and that's what she does. She gives me strength and courage.

After thirty days of doing Bridgeway's residential program, my family and I transitioned into Bridgeway's intensive outpatient program. The beginning of our sobriety was not easy, but maybe it shouldn't be, maybe we needed to work and struggle. We entered into a shelter and

I came to Bridgeway during the day. We then, as a whole family, lived in a used trailer for \$500. I have to tell you, we love that trailer; it is our first sober home as a family. My husband and I voluntarily joined a "Family Safety Court" in order to have more structure and more support and allow Division Family Services to be an even bigger part of our lives. We had nothing to hide, we only wanted our family back together, we only wanted to stay sober, we only wanted to make our children smile as often as we could. We also continued to receive the family-based treatment services of therapy, family counseling and parenting classes at Bridgeway.

My beautiful girl with the blue eyes has been reunited with us now; she has been with us for five months. I'm sure those of you who are parents can feel the light that having all of your children next to you bring to your life. That light is with me today, it is with me here in Washington DC, it is with me every moment. I know that being a parent is not a right, it is a privilege. It is mine and Darren's privilege to be parents.

No one plans to tear their world apart and the world of their children. Today, because of available family treatment, I can plan every day to put their world back together. This is work, but it is the best kind of work. It is a struggle, but it is the best kind of struggle. We continue to go to meetings, we continue to meet with the court, we continue to make sober friends. And we begin, for the first time, to be sober heroes to our children.