

TESTIMONY OF
ALLISON BRUNO
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
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My name is Allison Bruno. I am 22 years old. I was born and raised in Iowa. My mother and father were both addicts. My mom and dad got divorced when I was young and I didn't have much contact with my dad after that. As I think back on my life I now realize that I was predisposed to be an addict. I started drinking, smoking cigarettes, and smoking marijuana on a regular basis at 11 years old. My mom was an active user and she always had her friends over. One day I walked in on them smoking meth and my mom offered me some. I was 13 when I did meth for the first time, and I believe I was addicted from that day forward. I continued to smoke meth until I was 15. At 15, I found out I was pregnant. I didn't use while I was pregnant but I picked up were I left off after I had my daughter.

It never crossed my mind that I was not a being a good mother, because I had only known mothers who were addicts. But, as an addicted mother, I really lacked the proper skills that most people take for granted. I hadn't learned how to cook, clean, work, or manage money. When my daughter was 8 months old, I met a man who cooked meth and I started to shoot up meth. I would leave my baby with her dad, who was not an addict, for days and weeks at a time. I felt like I needed meth to survive. I didn't want my daughter to be exposed to what I was doing. I was ashamed of my addiction but I had no idea of how to stop.

When I was 18, I was kicked out of my mom's house and I became homeless. I was using meth so I didn't have to think or feel. I didn't have a place where I could bring my daughter to for visits and I felt tremendous guilt and shame for that. I got arrested at 18 for possession of a controlled substance and released the next day.

I went to a single adult treatment facility in Waterloo, Iowa shortly after my arrest. But the program was not very comprehensive. There were no therapeutic services that allowed me to understand the underlying reasons for my addiction. Not having my daughter with me in treatment was also very hard. I thought that since I could not see her, I might as well leave. I did leave and I continued to use until Christmas Eve 2002.

On Christmas Eve, I was granted a visit with my daughter for Christmas day. The guilt of not having any presents for my daughter and not being there for her got to me so bad that I signed myself into treatment. By the grace of God, I ended up at a family-based treatment program: the Heart Of Iowa woman and children's treatment facility.

At the Heart of Iowa, I got to have my little girl with me again, finally. Together we were in treatment. I had groups' everyday from 8 am to 8 pm while my daughter was in daycare or counseling. After 2 weeks, I moved to an apartment owned by the Heart of Iowa. I was taught how to cook, clean, and raise my little girl. As part of the Heart of Iowa, I was in residential treatment for 4 months, a halfway house for 4 months and after care for 2 months.

I now have 3 years and 4 months clean from drugs and alcohol. I am attending college at Kirkwood community college and majoring in Human Services. I had another child in recovery and she is happy and healthy. Today, I proudly say that my children are the light of my life. My 5 year old daughter started kindergarten this year and she is doing wonderful. I

am involved in the PTA and my children are involved in sports and gymnastics. I regularly attend twelve step meetings and the support group Moms Off Meth. Because of family treatment, I broke the cycle of addiction in my family. My children will have a different childhood than mine, and I will continue to be a loving, responsible, and healthy mother to them. My life is truly beautiful today. I have never been as happy as I am now.