

The Illinois Safe Haven Law is significant and personal to me. Rather than just hearing about it, I live it -- I am Illinois' Safe Haven baby number 32. From what I know, my story is a little different than most. I wasn't "dropped off" at a police or fire station, but was already a patient at the hospital. Although many specifics remain a mystery to me and my family, I know that my birth mom had significant health challenges and was in a state of desperation. She had to make the sacrifice of spending a few weeks in the hospital before I was born, fully knowing she was eventually going to leave without me. While this was an impossibly difficult scenario to face, the existence of the Safe Haven Law allowed me to be placed with, and grow up in, a loving and caring family. My family has adored me since day one, and will love and support me as I look to my future and as I get ready for college and beyond.

It is important that people know about the Safe Haven Law as an option, and spreading awareness and the real-life impact of what it has meant for people like me can be very powerful. When people can see and hear the stories of people who live because of the option that this law provides, it makes a much more meaningful and lasting impact. This law has literally saved dozens of lives, and that implication cannot be overstated enough. Being able to share my story has been a way of spreading awareness about the wonderful possibilities that the law exists for.

In telling my story to people at church, and some of my friends and teachers, I am hoping to start a ripple effect of communication and information that may eventually be shared with a young woman or teenager who is facing their own difficult choice. While I don't know all the specifics of my own story, the Safe Haven Law was likely shared with my birth mother, and I am so grateful that someone took the time to share that with her.

Beyond sharing individual stories with people, it's mostly crucial to get information about the Safe Haven Law to people who may face choices of their own someday. Information

about this law should be included in high school health classes, with social workers and social services agents, and in community health clinics and pregnancy counseling offices. Signs could be posted at bus stops and on city buses, and even some PSAs on radio and television. In college, I am planning on studying film & media arts, and would love to use that platform someday to share some amazing stories from others that have benefited greatly from this law.

My story is one of many, and the more ears that hear other stories and the lives that were impacted. The Safe Haven Law has saved my life and will continue to save others in the future.