

INTRODUCTION

Jill Stanek, a nurse at Christ Hospital in Oak Lawn, Illinois, held a tiny, 21-week-old baby boy in her hands. He weighed about half a pound and was around ten inches long. "He was too weak to move very much, expending any energy he had trying to breathe," Jill recalled. The baby had survived an abortion and was going to be left alone in a filthy utility room because his parents did not want to hold him as he died, and the attending nurse was too busy to bother with him.

Jill intervened. "I could not stand the thought of this suffering child dying alone in the soiled utility room, so I cradled and rocked him for the 45 minutes that he lived," she testified before the U.S. House of Representatives. "Toward the end, he was so quiet, I couldn't tell if he was alive unless I held him up to the light to see if I could see his heart beating through his chest wall."¹

To her horror, Jill discovered that babies who were born alive as a result of failed abortions were routinely left alone to die on the cold metal countertop in the hospital's utility room.² Distraught and filled with disbelief, Jill spoke out against the practice and was subsequently fired.

Jill worked to have the hospital prosecuted for violating the *Illinois Abortion Law of 1975* which required physicians to provide medical care for born-alive infants. However, then-Illinois Attorney General Jim Ryan found that there was "no basis for legal action."³ Similarly, the Office for Civil Rights at the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services wrote a letter to Jill stating that federal "civil rights laws do not cover abortions or the rights of newborns."⁴

Undeterred, Jill took her story all the way to the U.S. House of Representatives where, in 2001, she testified in support of the *Federal Born-Alive Infants Protection Act (BAIPA)*.