

Testimonials on Right to IVF Act from Washington state residents

Erica Tomas from Auburn, WA:

We were beyond devastated to hit this barrier in our journey to build a family, but were at least pleased to be in a state where there were no legal barriers to infertility treatment and to be in the hands of a highly trained and compassionate medical team. But then we got the second shock - our insurance did not cover any infertility care or treatments, and we could expect to spend a minimum of \$20,000 just on a single cycle of IVF. My spouse and I are both public employees in the state of Washington; I work for our state's department of health, and he works for a public hospital as a radiologic technician. **Our insurance comes through the state's public employees benefits board, which does not cover infertility benefits. In fact, only a few private employers in Washington actually provide that benefit,** but neither of us could see leaving our careers in the health sphere to try for a job at someplace like Microsoft or Starbucks, especially knowing how desperate the need for people in our workplaces was after COVID-19 burnout. So we decided to spend a year pursuing lower cost treatments with lower efficacy while we saved up for IVF. In May 2023, we had saved up enough to pay for a single egg retrieval, which after a month of medications had to be cancelled and rescheduled to June. We were lucky enough to get several viable embryos from this process, and in November 2023 underwent our first embryo transfer. **And after 3 years of trying, waiting, hoping, and praying, we succeeded; I was pregnant with our first child. It had cost us \$33,000 in medications, lab tests, ultrasounds, and procedures to get here, but we were finally going to be able to start our family. I am writing this now, 32 weeks pregnant with a baby due in several weeks, only because of the ability to access IVF.** The emotional and physical devastation of being unable to conceive and carry a child is an immense burden, and not a feeling I would wish on anyone. Being able to build and raise a family is part of so many Americans' dreams, and IVF is one of the pathways to make that happen. The technology and science to fight infertility is here, it is highly successful, and should be unconditionally available to everyone who wants to have a family, regardless of their geography. But availability is not enough; it needs to be accessible to everyone, regardless of income or financial means.

Maya Sullivan from White Salmon, WA:

I am diagnosed with unexplained infertility and recurrent pregnancy loss and am seeking treatment through IVF to start a family. I have been struggling to start a family for over 7 years. I have done 2 rounds of IVF and 4 embryo transfers resulting in multiple losses. **Over the last 4 years we have spent over \$35,000 out of pocket on fertility treatment in hopes to start a family. Going through years of infertility and medical treatments has put a huge financial burden on myself and my husband since we don't have insurance coverage and we pay for most treatments out of pocket. The stress and anxiety that comes with infertility impacts every part of my life.** It is very lonely and isolating and has changed many of my relationships with friends and family. It has impacted my career choices and I've put off vacations, other medical treatment, and other necessities because of it. **Not having insurance coverage is a direct barrier to starting my family as the average cost for IVF cycle in WA is about \$21,000.** The ability to and cost of medical care for a disease is fundamental should never be a barrier to seeking medical treatment and family building should be available to all those who desire to become parents.

Jennifer Tammen from Bremerton, WA

I was 31 and pregnant when I got my cancer diagnosis. Married just six months to my active duty Naval Officer husband, we were stationed at Naval Base Pearl Harbor, Hawaii. Electing to complete my pregnancy, I was told this was risky as they didn't know how far my cancer would go as my due date approached. Six weeks after our beautiful baby girl Laura was born in Seattle, Washington (we had been transferred), I learned the news that I would need an emergency hysterectomy. This was 1998. No egg freezing possible. No time for IVF and embryo freezing. The two more kids my husband and I envisioned as our future family just disappeared until... My wonderful surgeon at Swedish Hospital in Seattle told me that although I would lose my uterus, I would keep my eggs. More children were possible for us. We would need to do In Vitro fertilization with a gestational surrogate mother. As I was wheeled in for the surgery that would most likely

save my life, I received that gift of HOPE! I spent a year recovering from cancer and enjoying my baby daughter before I joined an online support group for parents pursuing surrogacy. Compensating a surrogate was illegal in Washington State at the time so to make a long story short, we underwent IVF in California. We worked with a surrogate mother there, and it was our second IVF attempt that resulted in our son, Jonathan. His name means gift from God. **Our TriCare military health insurance paid for a few fertility tests for me but nothing else. All our IVF bills, etc. were tens of thousands. We talked about money so many times during our fertility journey. And we liquidated all the savings we had. Our family is our #1 priority for us. We were grateful that we could barely swing this. Had IVF been covered, it would have been so much easier for us. Now IVF is under-threat. What? I never thought I'd see this day.** So here I am, sharing my story now in hopes that it might make a difference. We just raised our family and it's been a dream come true. We are still living in Washington State, near the submarine base where my husband is an Advisor for the US Navy (civil service). **I feel like IVF saved my life. I was almost suicidal when I had cancer and my opportunity for more kids in the usual way was taken from us. I know IVF saves others. I stand by it. Thank you for protecting it. And thank you for fighting to help require health insurance to pay for it.**

Katie Lou Seidel from Maple Valley, WA

Health is so incredibly important and yet it's not guaranteed. Because of my health complications it made planning a family with my husband challenging. We want to build our family and thank God there was the option of IVF. I feel that all people should have FULL access to IVF without question and the challenges of insurance coverage—make it universally available. If people want to have a family the government and insurance companies should not have the right to say NO.

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