

TRANSCRIPT OF PUBLIC HEARING

Public Testimonies IN SUPPORT of SENATE BILL 384

**From the Senate Committee on Judiciary, Corrections, Insurance, Campaign
Finance Reform, and Housing on Tuesday, November 10, 2009**

Transcribed by Gordon Myers using the following "Wisconsin Eye" video footage:

mms://71.87.25.133/IVOD/COM/COM_091110_SEN_JUD_1.wmv

mms://71.87.25.133/IVOD/COM/COM_091110_SEN_JUD_2.wmv

Lena Taylor

Honorable members of the committee, thank you for taking testimony relating to Senate Bill 384--the Freedom of Choice of Faith Act--a piece of legislation relating to a person's constitutional right to practice their faith, healing beliefs, and the exemptions in the law regarding prosecutions of crimes. The unfortunate case that has happened with the Neumann family in Wausau has drawn much attention, not just within our state but within the nation, to the issue of electing spiritual or Christian Science treatment in lieu of medical or surgical treatment for a child.

The Freedom of Choice of Faith Act modifies current law to further protect the child. Current law provides exemption to prosecution for parents or guardians who elect spiritual treatment in lieu of medical treatment of their child. This bill repeals this exemption to prosecution. Also, under current law, individuals choosing Christian Science treatment cannot be compelled to submit to medical or surgical treatment. SB 384 mandates the use of medical treatment as required when a child is taken into custody because the child is in immediate danger from his or her surroundings. To be clear, law enforcement can determine at their discretion when any child is in danger and immediately remove the child from the home under current law. This bill says that medical treatment must be given if the child is in need of medical treatment.

To protect the rights of practice of faith, this bill creates an affirmative defense for parents or guardians when their conduct is in good faith and is a reasonable use of spiritual, prayer, or religious treatment in lieu of medical treatment. However, by using an affirmative defense the burden of proof goes to the defendant to prove that they were or are capable of faith healing. Lastly, in applying that affirmative defense, the bill provides direction to the presiding judge by outlining nine factors related to determining whether the use of spiritual, prayer, or religious treatment in lieu of medical treatment was indeed reasonable.

There will be many person testifying today on this bill. I encourage you to listen carefully to each with an open mind, realizing that we all come to the table with different perspectives, different beliefs, different faith. The goal of this bill is to find the balance to protecting the children and ensuring that we do not violate the first amendment right of our citizens. They have the right of faith, even if it is not our faith. I encourage you to review it closely and to ask yourself--ask me questions if need be. But I ask for your support of this legislation.

Glenn Grothman

I'd like to thank you for introducing the bill. I think it's a necessary bill. I think there's always the danger of intolerance in our society and I see just going through the handouts that we're going to have some people that are going to express that intolerance later on, but I'm glad to see we have some people looking out for freedom and people who believe in faith. Thank you.

Joseph Farkas

Thank you for this opportunity to support this bill. I am the legislative and media liaison for the Christian Science churches and societies here in Wisconsin. I am also a Christian Science practitioner--someone who provides help through prayer at the request of individuals who have chosen to rely on spiritual means for healing as taught in Christian Science.

The protection of [*children is paramount*]¹. The Christian Science church has always supported the protection of children. Our newspaper, the Christian Science Monitor, a Pulitzer Prize-winning paper has always highlighted aspects in society where there has been an abuse and have also called for solutions to this. I'm not going to go into the Neumann case because Senator Taylor so eloquently described it; just to point out that the Neumanns were not Christian Scientists. This bill also clarifies the Wisconsin Medical Practices Act, which is merely a licensing part of the law.

Some people have expressed concern that the language supersedes Wisconsin child protection laws and that is not the case. This legislation adds already existing language in law that really points out that the state does have the opportunity to immediately step in and remove a child in danger, need, illness, or sickness and then order medical treatment.

I'm not a lawyer, but in terms of the affirmative defense that's in this bill--it provides an opportunity for everyone to hear all the facts that are involved in this case, a full story, and I believe reasonable people in a jury or a judge can listen and determine the reasonableness of the people's actions, so I believe it helps everyone understand what happened and form a reasonable decision about the facts.

At the heart of all of this, I think both opponents and proponents have one goal in mind: do no harm to children. Spiritual healing is at the heart of this issue and I truly believe that laws can be passed that protect children and accommodate the reasonable use of spiritual healing for children's healthcare needs. This is such a bill, and I ask that it be voted out of committee, and I thank you for letting me speak today.

Symbree Van Faucen

Good morning. My name is Symbree Van Faucen. I am a member of the Christian Science church and I wanted to start my testimony by thanking Senator Taylor and the committee for taking the time to hear from members of the Wisconsin faith community like me who feel strongly that prayer is a safe and effective means of maintaining the health and welfare of our children and our families. I am speaking in support of Senate Bill 384. I'm a mom of three children. I have twin girls who are 12, a little boy who is 9, and my first priority is the well being of these children. Nothing is more important to me than their safety, their health, and their happiness.

I do respect the need of the state of Wisconsin to ensure that all children, regardless of their parents' religious affiliations, are protected from harm and that's why I support the proposed legislation. It gives parents the legal framework in which to present information about their spiritual background and their history of success in relying on prayer for healing as an affirmative defense in the event of a jury trial. My own family has had many examples of physical healing throughout the years--everything from colds, coughs, rashes, small stuff to medically-diagnosed instances of strep throat, anemia, and in one case abnormal hip development.

I know my time is limited; I did want to share a few details of this last example as it was a medically-diagnosed situation where, at the birth of my son, the attending pediatrician at Meriter hospital gave him a checkup, said everything was great, except there was this hip-click, which he said could lead to a permanent disability if it wasn't addressed and that he wouldn't crawl properly and then wouldn't walk properly. I'll just conclude by saying that I did turn to prayer for this and when I returned two months later for his regularly scheduled checkup it was determined that there was no further problem and this has been

diagnosed and recorded in his health care exam sheets that I still do have. I think that Christian Science care can be provided responsibly and I thank the committee for considering this legislation which helps us to do that.

Robin Engel

Good morning and thank you for this opportunity. My name is Robin Engel and I live on Highway 89 in Jefferson. I am here to support the Taylor bill because of its clear-headed thinking necessary to protect children. The Christian Science church I belong to in Fort Atkinson was founded in the 1890s by pillars of the community. This legislature honored its centennial anniversary. The individual contributions of our members to the community over the years have been significant and enduring. My heart goes out to the Neumann family, whose daughter died despite their best prayers.

The welfare of children transcends dogma and constitutional arguments. Christian Scientists are loving and responsible parents who pray with and for our children because it works. My own children and grandchildren have been healed of medically-examined concerns, including a hip-joint issue, hearing and speech impairment, and a contagious skin disease through the practical application of Christian Science.

Christian Science does not prohibit medical treatment nor do Christian Scientists think less of church members who use doctors. Some of us wear glasses, get broken bones set, and have surgical procedures. As a Christian Scientist, I obey the law regarding quarantine of contagious diseases and vaccinations, and I am grateful to this state for its strong child protection laws, and I support and obey them. I commend you for your thoughtfulness in finding a solution that will protect children and provide fairness in a jury trial. Thank you for supporting the Taylor bill.

Barry Whiteman

My name is Barry Whiteman; I'm here to speak in favor of Senate Bill 384 because it protects children by removing the criminal child abuse religious accommodation that the Neumann's defense attorney used to try to shield prosecution. The bill also protects children by making it clear that the state can, at any time, go into a home, take custody of a seriously ill child, and provide medical treatment. It's a reasonable compromise.

My wife and I were both raised in Christian Science and so were our three kids, and they're all in their twenties, and they're gone; they're launched, and they're happy, healthy, and fully launched, and as everybody knows that's no small task. We saw many evidences of spiritual healing with our children.

Some years ago one of them was hit by a car while riding his bike and he spent six weeks in a fine hospital--traction, the whole bit. It was one situation where we just weren't prepared to handle it exclusively through prayer. We feel it's important to practice a reasonable and responsible use of spiritual treatment and prayer. Anyway, he recovered fully, but his doctors did say that as a result of his serious leg injury he might have trouble being fully mobile in the future. He was six years old at the time. Anyway, he recovered fully, and it turns out that that kid played high school tennis, high school football, then he went on to college, and he played college division three tennis and football and he was named All Conference three times for tennis. So he did okay, and his leg is just fine. Continued prayer for our son had a valuable role in that long-term healing. Prayer does work. It promotes very good health outcomes for kids.

I'm in favor in the responsible and reasonable use of prayer that promotes this well being and the health and protection of children is paramount, and for these reasons I support Senate Bill 384 as a good compromise, and I urge you to do so as well. Thank you very much.

Wanda Warmack

Thank you Senator Taylor and I appreciate that I have submitted some written testimony and you can refer to that for the points, but I just thought for clarification in addressing what the former speaker raised as objections to the bill, it will not make it more difficult to intervene. I think the chairman has recognized that it actually iterates what's already the standard within Wisconsin that the state can immediately take custody of a child and provide immediate--without court order--medical treatment for seriously ill children. What this legislation does do is provide an anti-discrimination provision at a trial which would just allow presentation of evidence, and the iteration of the different factors--they're very concrete: the age of the child, whether the parents knew it was serious or not, these are all considerations that are very clearly defined in the aspects that you set forth as part of information that can be presented in trial. So, if there are any questions I'm willing to answer them if necessary later. I am here representing the Christian Science church; I am the legislative manager of the area that deals with government.

Janet Chism

My name is Janet Chism and I'm here to speak in favor of the Taylor bill. I've lived in Madison for a number of years, but don't get worried that I'm going back this far; I was born in a small town in Oklahoma, where I was raised a Methodist and had a wonderful experience in that church.

They had a strong sense of community and I was instilled with the idea of caring for others. The most interesting thing about life in that church was my Sunday School teachers who were brilliant research scientists for Continental Oil Company, as it was known at that time, and they taught me to challenge all my thinking, to look at what I was thinking, to challenge it, to be a thinker, and to search for the truth. I think my parents were happy that I went on a spiritual journey and left the church. I hope they were; my sister's a Tibetan Buddhist and my other sister's a Catholic, so we kind of took it at heart what our research scientist-teachers told us.

I ended up studying Christian Science and becoming a member and raised a daughter in it. When I look back on my experience as a Methodist and as a Christian Scientist, and compare my experience in those churches, I can honestly say that both churches are filled with parents who love their children and who work tirelessly for their benefit, for their nurturing, for their protection. So as a Christian Scientist, I would not want a state law that benefits parents who do neglect their children or abuse them, and as a parent I can say unequivocally that I would never knowingly sacrifice the life of my child for my religious beliefs; I just wouldn't do it.

And so this brings me to the Taylor bill, because I do think it protects the rights of children, and I also think it gives parents who might find themselves in a court case the ability to explain themselves. If I were a juror on that case, I would want to know what they were thinking so I could help render a more informed verdict. So I thank you for your work on this bill and I support it.

Jon Axelrod

Thank you Senator Taylor. First I want to thank you and thank the members of the committee for allowing me to come express not my support or opposition to the bill, but to try to give you my analysis from a legal point of view, and specifically a constitutional law point of view.

[At this point Senator Taylor interrupted to ask whether Attorney Axelrod was registering in favor or speaking for informational only, and Attorney Axelrod clarified that he was registering in support.]

I'm supporting it because I think from a constitutional point of view as well as a legal point of view it's just an excellent balance. I represent the Christian Science church. I'm a partner in Dewitt, Ross, and Stevens in Madison. I'm not a Christian Scientist, and as I said I'm not here today to express my views either in support of the policy in the bill or against the policy in the bill, but instead to try to analyze SB 384 from a constitutional law point of view, and let me tell you, I think not only are you an excellent chairman but I think you're an excellent attorney because your proposal strikes a very thoughtful balance between the perceived abuses of the Neumann case on the one hand, who incidentally were not Christian Scientists and who incidentally were convicted. And the opposite pole, which I believe would promote religious discrimination and deny people of faith the opportunity to reasonably practice their faith, and I believe that would be unconstitutional under the First Amendment and particularly the standards in the City of Hialeah case in the United States Supreme Court.

I think what you've done is very thoughtfully struck a balance between these two poles, if you will, and I think that the affirmative defense which would remain in Wisconsin is done in a particularly thoughtful way because it would allow people their due process rights to explain themselves if it ever came to a trial in front of a judge or in front of a jury as to whether or not they acted reasonably, but it wouldn't put handcuffs on the court or the jury to accept that testimony, but simply to evaluate that testimony in light of all other factors including whether medical treatment could have solved that particular condition, the family's religious background, and so forth. So I applaud your efforts; I think this is the legislative process at its best. I did come today hoping that you would allow me more than two-and-a-half minutes, and I understand why that's not possible, but I have some written which I would like to give to the page or the clerk and I thank you.

Nancy Gingras

Good afternoon Senator Taylor, and a very heartfelt thank you for this opportunity today for not only myself but for everyone who's being able to speak in favor of this bill and to the committee, thank you. As you mentioned my name is Nancy Gingras, and in my own experience I have practiced Christian Science all my life, and I have found it to be an effective way of treating illness and injury. Therefore, as a mother of two children who are now grown, it was just natural for me to turn to Christian Science in the healthcare of my children. However the children's father was not a practicing Christian Scientist, and talk about tolerance, we had that right within our own home, and there were circumstances where we were prompted to seek medical help. I always wanted to seek what was most effective and also, one of the previous speakers mentioned about the children, and I want you to know that from the youngest children on, they are receptive to prayer and they do really register right in that decision-making.

As parents, we love our children, and I would never think of sacrificing their well being, and the good news is there is no stigma in our church if a parent seeks medical help. We are a very loving congregation that supports one another, and we all know how it feels to have a sick child. I'd like to share two healings which did involve physicians in regard to my son who is now serving as a captain in the United States Air Force.

As a nine year-old, he developed a deep cough. His father and I decided to take him to a doctor. The doctor diagnosed our son with double-pneumonia. After a discussion with the doctor, it was with his approval we were able to take the child home. And as a family, we discussed and made the decision to rely on prayer alone because we had seen many effective healings. But we complied with the doctor's request and returned within a couple of days, and per his examination, the child was free of any effect of pneumonia. In fact, he went skiing that weekend.

The same son as a teenager was standing alongside a school bus when he was hit by an SUV that did not see him. A head injury resulted and an ambulance was called. His father and I met him in the emergency room, in fact this happened right here in Madison at the University Hospital. The doctor explained that there was significant bleeding under the skull and our son was kept overnight for observation, but there were no medical procedures being implemented, as we were relying on prayer, but per the father's decision, we did have the observation.

During the night, our son regained consciousness, and within a matter of a few days regained normal function and was released without any medical treatment. Before his release he had a CAT scan which showed improvement. The abrasions were cleared up in three days. He went back to school within a week, and in order for our son to attend the Air Force Academy an extensive medical examination was administered. He received a CAT scan of the head and there was no trace of injury found. I'm so grateful for these healings, and grateful for the compassionate physicians who let us know when it was safe for my son to come home from the hospital. Christian Scientists, like parents everywhere, want only the best care for their children. Thank you.

Martin Evanson

Thank you, my name is Marty Evanson, I live in the southwest side of Madison. I shouldn't have any trouble dealing with the two-minute drill without any timeouts. I'm a lifelong Christian Scientist, and a long-time Christian Science Sunday School teacher. I'm blessed to have five energetic aspiring and inspiring young students in my charge. I'm here to speak in favor of Senator Lena Taylor's bill.

Children are precious gifts who deserve the very best comfort and immediate care that we can give them. Christian Scientists rely on the proven and practical methods that have been most effective in their lives and in the best interest of their children. Christian Science treatment is extremely effective as I've found, as it provides physical healing coupled with a growing understanding and deepening relationship with the Almighty.

The well being of children is a foremost and solemn responsibility. I support this bill because it ensures that laws do not provide a shield for irresponsible or injurious behavior and allows parents to explain their actions in the event of judicial proceedings. Thank you.

James Treutler

Thank you Senator Taylor and committee members. My name is James Treutler; that's why my students call me Mr. T. Throughout my life I have worked with children as a high school teacher, coach, and athletic director. As a little aside, one of your senators who's not on this committee [Ted Kanavas], is a past athlete and student of mine. As a coach and athletic director and a teacher, it's always been my purpose for educating them and looking out for their well being. This legislation that is being presented leaves no doubt in people's mind that the proper care of children is of utmost importance. It clearly points out that there is no bar to prosecution for inappropriate behavior regarding the health and safety of children. It reinforces the already existing law which gives the right to the state to step in and take custody of a child who is deemed to be in danger and to provide medical treatment as needed.

As someone who has seen the effectiveness of spiritual care in my own life, I support the language being proposed which provides for a fair trial if someone is charged in connection with the use of spiritual treatment. Clarity and fairness is what this bill is designed to provide. I ask in the name of all those who rely on spiritual treatment that you support this bill. Thank you very much.

Charles Wellington

Good morning Chairperson Taylor, Senators Grothman and Hopper. My name is Charles Wellington and I live in Monroe, Wisconsin with my wife, Christine. We've lived there since 1979. I'm here today to speak in favor of Senate Bill 384. The committee's heard a lot of testimony here this morning, and I'm here to add one more. Let me, if I may, begin with my story to help you get an idea of the foundation of where I'm coming from. Shortly after World War I, my grandmother was informed by more than one doctor that she'd never be able to have children. She suffered with this diagnosis for many years, until she heard about a physician that might be able to help. She visited him in Evanston, Illinois and he also confirmed the diagnosis. But while she was in his office, she noticed a book on the shelf of his library, that was Science and Health with Key to the Scriptures by Mary Baker Eddy, the founder of Christian Science. She asked about it, and he gave it to her and said it might help. A few years later, my uncle was born, and a year so after that my mother was born. My grandmother became a Christian Scientist; my mother was raised that way and I was raised that way with my brothers and sister.

In high school, I sustained a particularly severe back injury in wrestling, and my father who is not a Christian Scientist insisted that I be taken to the hospital where I was, and X-rays confirmed that I was in pretty bad shape and would never wrestle again or be involved in any physically demanding activity. After that diagnosis, I asked my father if I could utilize Christian Science treatment and he readily agreed, and I did, with the help of a Christian Science practitioner, and I was back wrestling within a week. I also participated in intercollegiate athletics in college and I've been fairly physically active all my life. I've continued to study and practice Christian Science because it's been proven effective in my life, and as you may have concluded, my wife and I have raised our children similarly.

Let me be perfectly clear, however, that nothing challenges ones beliefs more acutely than relying on them in the care of one's children. Any parent with a sick or ailing child wants only one thing, and that's the immediate and complete alleviation of that child's suffering. Some parents turn to medicine for that, and that's perfectly fine. My wife and I turn to prayer for one reason: that we had found it to be effective, and logically inferred that it would continue to be so. By choosing this route, we hope to accomplish two

things: one, the alleviation of the physical problem, and two, teaching our children by experience that God indeed was a very present help in trouble.

SB 384 simply permits a parent who may face criminal charges regarding his or her decisions relating to a child to explain to a trier of fact why a decision was made. This simply reflects basic fairness. There's a world of difference between using prayer for a child's illness because it has proven effective in the past and blindly martyring one's child in the name of religion. No one can rationally support the latter, but the former is critical when weighing these issues. The issue is extremely important for our time. The world seems to be spinning ever faster toward a more secular disposition. Christian Scientists do not ask for any special treatment or protection as suggested by some. They would readily acknowledge that the welfare of children is paramount. SB 384 strikes a fair balance in preserving the welfare of children while not creating an atmosphere that would have a chilling effect on spiritual healing, and I respectfully submit that it should become the law of this state. Thank you very much.

Jorie Clark

Thank you so much, Senator Taylor, for sponsoring this bill, and the courage to bring forward concepts and discussions that don't often happen. What's wonderful about it is that encourages all of us to come forward in a discussion to share ideas, so thank you to all the senators who will be also reviewing this thoughtfully. My name is Jorie Clark, and I'm here for a couple of reasons. First of all, I'm a mother of three children here in Wisconsin and I have personally logged hundreds of hours in prayer as well as hundreds of hours in hospitals supporting family members who've chosen medical treatment. I'm also a founder of a virtual world on the internet that serves over two-and-a-quarter million families online, and we've been recognized both for our innovation in education, and at our looking at solving social issues. I've also been a lead participant in the development of the Children's Online Privacy Protection Act, working both by invitation of the FTC to talk at hearings, as well as the Commerce Department. So keeping children safe is a key focus of both my personal interest and my professional work.

In my work, we teach children to think and families to share ideas and make informed choices. With that, we look at solving social issues from a variety of viewpoints while protecting everyone involved. A second consideration is following the rigors of science. We're encouraging children to apply scientific methods in reviewing data, looking for patterns, applying knowledge to problems, and providing proofs of effectiveness. It is for this reason that I support Senator Taylor's bill, because it appears to both provide fairness and reasonableness. It also encourages thinking, protecting children, while also allowing parents to choose healthcare treatments that have proven effective for them and share their reasoning if needed. Thank you very much.

Ginger Mack

My name is Ginger Mack, as you stated, and I'm a student here at UW Madison. I also meet with the Christian Science Student Organization here on campus. From my own experience, I grew up as a Christian Scientist, and I can attest to the fact that I was diligently cared for by my parents. I have also seen firsthand that Christian Science parents respond promptly to the needs of their children, and are able to seek medical help for their children when needed. As a constituent I feel it is important to have legislation that is transparent and allows Christian Scientists to provide the very best care for their children. Also, this includes being accountable to State and Federal laws. Thank you.

Margaret Lewis

Thank you Senator Taylor and committee members. My name is Margaret Lewis; I am representing myself speaking in favor of Senate Bill 384. I have been a student of Christian Science for more than 50 years and prayer in lieu of medical treatment has been the treatment of first resort in my family for four generations. Like you, I had the honor of serving three years in the State Legislature in the 80s and when this current provision of the law related to child abuse and neglect was passed. I've been married for 28 years, my husband is not a Christian Scientist, I have three very active children born every off-election year that were raised very publically and have experienced healings of every childhood disease--measles, burns, cuts, ear aches, allergic reactions to bee stings, falls. I did, however, have the bone of my oldest son, when he was in middle school, set. My children have not been immunized, nor attended health classes that focus on the causes of disease, but they have seen a doctor as they have had to have physical exams to participate in sports--in soccer, in diving, in cross country, in wrestling--and have had their needs met.

I too have experienced many healings of physical, financial, career, or relationship issues, but I have also had treatment for an inoperative lymphatic system in my left side, a detached retina, and all my children were born in a hospital. I may not be a model Christian Scientist, and that's why I call myself a student of Christian Science, and frankly we do not have a model law. Each of us does the best we can based on our experience, choosing the alternatives that are our highest sense of right under the circumstances. In lawmaking, we try to do the same thing; we try to assure that what is passed produces the greatest good for the greatest number and can't foresee every individual circumstance. This is why, I think, we appreciate so much the work on building balance and tolerance in the work that you have done.

The current criminal law says that child abuse and neglect does not occur solely for the reason someone relies on prayer in lieu of medical treatment. I kind of liked that law; I didn't want to be considered a felon for practicing my religion with my children. The jury in the Neumann case took into account not only that prayer was used, but the effectiveness of that prayer. Folks are on notice: if you choose prayer in the case of children, it better be effective. That's a good thing. We all want the very best treatment for children. No one's personal pride or blind belief should be put before a child's safety. However, neither current law, nor what's been proposed absolves from legal penalty those that have deeply held religious beliefs no matter what their history and experience might be.

Under current law, and under the proposed law, a child can be removed from a parent's custody, as we have discussed earlier, if there's a life-threatening situation. So what does this change contribute? If language in current law is removed, it does give some guidance to parents as to what they can reasonably expect to be able to present in a defense if a tragedy occurs. Just like a doctor sued for malpractice would be able to present evidence as to why a correct diagnosis and treatment might have been difficult because each individual is different. In some courts, this presentation of evidence has not been allowed. The good news is that the proposed law continues to recognize that there are those with different deeply held religious beliefs that have a long history of successful healing practice, and at the least, they should be allowed to share their experiences with the court and that their experience may be relevant to the actions they take. Thank you Senator Taylor for respecting deeply held religious beliefs, and I'd be glad to answer any questions. Thank you.

Sonette Tippins

I hadn't planned to speak, I was just going to be here in favor of this bill, but I couldn't help but ask if I could speak after hearing the testimony against by the medical representatives. If, as a parent, I could be assured--and now I'm a grandparent--that every child under medical treatment would never die, would always be cured, and would become fine, I would be thrilled. I'd be delighted, and I think everybody would rejoice. But we all know that's not the case. Every parent chooses what they believe is the most effective health care for their child. I was able to raise my children with Christian Science very successfully, and I want to speak so that my daughter will be assured this right for her children.

When I was pregnant with my first child, at six months into the pregnancy, I was stricken with terrible pains and went to the health clinic, where our doctor diagnosed me with acute appendicitis, and he said the condition was so serious that I must go immediately for surgery but the baby would die. So he called in a specialist on appendicitis who confirmed the diagnosis and, with tears in their eyes, they called the hospital and said to be ready for me. They told my husband and me that because of the seriousness of this appendicitis, either the baby was already dead, or he would die during the surgery. I stopped at home, which was en route to the hospital and called a Christian Science practitioner to ask her to support me with prayer. By the time I got to the hospital, the surgeon was waiting, and he happened to be the same man that I had been seeing as an obstetrician. He said, "I know you're a Christian Scientist and I am going to *[give you some time to see if you can get better by your Christian Science.]*" I was checked into the hospital, and a few hours later the doctor stood by my bed and pronounced me well. He said, "you are ready to go home, and could even go to school--I was a high school teacher. But why don't you have a nice breakfast here, and then your husband can come and get you, and you stay home and enjoy the rest of the day." At the proper time, this doctor delivered my dear little baby, who was normal in every way. All of the children's health care needs were met through Christian Science, with my husband, who was not a Christian Scientist, so impressed by the quick healings he witnessed, that he too preferred Christian Science treatment for our children.

*When our daughter was born, after a few months it was evident that one of her toes had never grown. Through prayer, by the time she turned one, her toes were all completely normal. I have never heard of any medical treatment that can make limbs or toes grow.]*²

When my son was twelve, he had such severe acne that it covered his arms, his legs, his hair. You can imagine the torment he experienced in school and the name-calling. So my husband, who was a supporter of Christian Science for our children for healing, we both decided we would take him to a skin specialist. We took him for two years to three different doctors who did everything they could and we followed everything they told us to do. He only became worse. Finally, at age fourteen our son asked to rely entirely on Christian Science for treatment, and he was healed in one month. I am grateful for the efforts of the medical profession, and I am grateful for their contributions to everybody's health and safety. I also believe that parents should be able to use their own experience as a guide in what is going to provide the best care for their children, and if their experience has shown them that Christian Science is it, then I would like that privilege to be there. Thank you.

Transcription Notes

There were two points during the video recording of this senate committee session in which there are gaps in the video footage from which I was writing this transcript. The first occurs briefly during the testimony of Joseph Farkas and the second occurs for a longer period of time during the final testimony of Sonette Tippins. I went ahead and contacted both Mr. Farkas and Ms. Tippins directly and asked that they each fill in the missing sections themselves. They emailed me back with the text of what they believe they said. I have included this text in the transcript above *italicized* and enclosed in [square brackets]. While I was present at the hearing myself, so I could have filled in these sections from my own memory, I thought it better to ask the primary sources themselves what they said.