

**Pregnant Students Deserve Better ®
than Abortion**
By Serrin M. Foster

A few months ago I happened to hear an audio recording on C-SPAN of the 1973 oral arguments before the U.S. Supreme Court in *Roe v. Wade*. Attorney Sarah Weddington argued *Roe*, in part, on the basis that a woman could not complete her education if she were pregnant. Why not? Women are not suddenly stupid because they are pregnant.

Women deserve better.

Shortly after I began speaking on college campuses about America's rich 200-year pro-life feminist history, a Feminists for Life board member shared the story of her unplanned pregnancy and subsequent miscarriage while in graduate school. That was in 1995. I realized that I had never seen a visibly pregnant student on a college campus. Shortly thereafter, Feminists for Life discovered that college health clinics overwhelmingly refer pregnant women to abortion clinics.

Clearly, decades after *Roe*, women still feel forced to choose between sacrificing their education or their children. This is unacceptable.

Research by the Guttmacher Institute, Planned Parenthood's research arm, documents that women of college age are at highest risk of having an abortion. Forty-five percent of women who have abortions are of college age, 18-24 years old. Women with some college had a pregnancy rate that was lower than average, but still "had the highest abortion rate of any educational group." The statistics support what pregnant and parenting students have been telling Feminists for Life for years: that they need more resources and support. Among women who had abortions, 71 percent of 18- to 19-year-olds and 58 percent of 20- to 24-year-olds said having a child would interfere with their education or career.

Feminists for Life hosted its first Pregnancy Resource Forum at Georgetown University in 1997. Within two years of prioritizing what was most needed, Georgetown trustees set aside nearby housing for parents, started Hoyas for Kids childcare, established a 7-day-a-week hotline, and cross-trained counselors to address pregnancy resources as well as sexual assault and domestic violence. Every year Georgetown hosts another Pregnancy Resource Forum to see what improvements should be made next. Since that first forum, FFL has brought its College Outreach Program to top colleges across the country, including Harvard, Swarthmore, Berkeley, Stanford, Northwestern, University of Chicago, Loyola-Baltimore and Notre Dame, among others. We have shared solutions created at one college with the next. Every college built on the others' solutions.

University of Virginia students started a babysitting service. Pro-life students at Berkeley raised funds and placed diaper decks in men's and women's rooms all over campus to support more than 1,000 student parents enrolled there each year. Wellesley pro-life and pro-choice students recently collaborated in a rummage sale to benefit pregnant and parenting mothers.

Remarkably, the Guttmacher Institute reports that in the decade since 1994 (when Feminists for Life's College Outreach Program began), abortions among college-educated women have declined by 30 percent.

Inspired by FFL's Pregnancy Resource Forums, the Elizabeth Cady Stanton Pregnant and Parenting Student Services Act was introduced into Congress in 2005.

The bill is named for the mother of the women's movement, who was also the mother of seven children. Stanton was a revolutionary who consistently advocated for the rights of women, women's education, the acceptance and celebration of motherhood, and the protection of our

children—born and unborn. Elizabeth Cady Stanton would have been proud to know that she still inspires action today.

If passed, the act will establish a pilot program to provide \$10 million for 200 grants to encourage institutions of higher education to establish and operate a pregnant and parenting student services office. The on-campus office would serve parenting students, student parents-to-be who are pregnant or imminently anticipating an adoption, and students who are placing or have placed a child for adoption. This would be an important step toward providing the solutions women really need.

Abortion is a reflection that we have failed women—and that women have had to settle for far less than they need and deserve.

We need to focus on systematically eliminating the root causes of abortion—as Elizabeth Cady Stanton’s close friend and partner in suffragist organizing, Susan B. Anthony, urged us to do 150 years ago—not rely on abortion to cover up our failure to help women. Women deserve better than abortion.

Serrin M. Foster is president of Feminists for Life of America, and the creator of the Women Deserve Better® than Abortion campaign. Her speech, “The Feminist Case Against Abortion” was recognized as one of the “Great Speeches in History” in the anthology, Women’s Rights. Permission to publish granted with copyright attribution to Serrin M. Foster, president of Feminists for Life of America.