



A Program of the Center for Public Justice

Dear Ela,

As March marks Women's History Month, I have been thinking a lot about the women whose stories have shaped me over my lifetime. When I was young I was drawn to children. I wanted to be wherever the babies were, so I volunteered as much as possible in the church nursery. To my absolute glee this meant I was surrounded by babies. What I did not expect was to also be surrounded by their mothers. Sitting there holding a tiny baby, I would listen to their discussions on the general woes and joys of motherhood. I was fascinated by these mothers.



Many of their stories were filled with humor or pride as they discussed the most recent accomplishment of their toddler, but what struck me to my core were the stories of their birthing experiences. Taking turns around the circle, they shared feelings of fear around birth, the ways their wishes were ignored in the delivery room, the lack of support for breastfeeding, or the hardship of isolation during a postpartum recovery. Every story was unique, but they all had one thing in common: a lack of

quality care when they desperately needed it the most.

By the time I went to college, these stories were embedded deeply in my heart. It made me wonder why these stories are more common for women of color? Why are there some communities without any access to prenatal care? Why do so many women die **after** delivery? These questions and stories led me to years of maternal health research where I discovered these were not isolated events or a trend in just one community. As a society we are letting our mothers down as the maternal mortality and morbidity rates continue to rise.

After working with numbers, graphs, and hard data for several years, I still come back to the stories I was told in a tiny nursery room filled with mothers asking for help. Mothers who were doing their absolute best to raise the next generation well, even in the face of financial, physical, and emotional hardships. This March, think about the stories of your mothers, sisters, friends, or maybe even your own. Let those stories transform you into an advocate for healthcare and social support so that mothers can thrive alongside the children they so valiantly nurture and protect.

Grace and peace,

Madi Allen



Advocacy Manager
Center for Public Justice

Maternal Health and Making a World That's Good for Women

In the wake of the Supreme Court's decision in *Dobbs v. Jackson Women's Health*, the legal landscape around abortion in the U.S. is shifting. So, too, should the environment in which women experience pregnancy, give birth, and care for new children.

The nation's Medicaid health insurance program is one such resource. Over 40 percent of new births in the U.S. are covered by Medicaid, and federal law requires Medicaid programs to cover women during the first 60 days after giving birth. The importance of maternal health does not end with those first 60 days. Before the pandemic, women who were covered by Medicaid and similar programs were at risk of losing health insurance a few months after giving birth. Temporary, pandemic-era changes to Medicaid have helped more women retain coverage in recent years. Now is the time to make access to health insurance for

new moms permanent.

Motherhood is a radical, unpredictable calling that depends upon a woman's whole self: body, mind, and spirit. Affordable, accessible, and culturally-sensitive health care during pregnancy and postpartum is an important part of making a world that's good for women.

Read more:

- A piece in *The Atlantic* this summer kicked off recent discussion about maternal health and pro-life values. Elizabeth Bruenig, "[Make Birth Free](#)," *The Atlantic*, July 2022.
- Elena Rivera, "[Texas considers extending Medicaid access after birth to make having a baby safer](#)," Texas Public Broadcasting, March 2, 2023.
- Just over [a dozen states](#) have yet to extend Medicaid to moms for the 12 months after pregnancy or birth. Join our [next community call](#) in May to share about what health care for new mothers in your state looks like.

Recording and Resources: Living Life Abundantly

The recording of last week's "Living Life Abundantly" webinar from our *Setting a Table Where Families Flourish* series with baker, writer, and speaker Kendall Vanderslice is now available.

A big thank you to Kendall for speaking on the abundance we can find when we eat together as the body of Christ.

You can [access the slide deck](#) and [watch the recording](#) any time you like.



Here are a few additional resources that were mentioned during the event:

- [Worship at the Table curriculum](#) - designed to help churches, small groups, and groups of friends consider how to host more intentional meals in their own communities as well.
- [By Bread Alone](#) - Kendall Vanderslice's most recent publication reflecting on hunger, longing, and the goodness of God.

Save the Date: May Community Call and Text Study

Join us on Thursday, May 11 from 12-1pm ET for the second of our quarterly community calls around the theme of abundance. Each meeting in the series, titled "[Setting a Table Where Families Flourish](#)" will include a Biblical text study and introduce an update and practical ways to support pro-family policies. In May, we will focus on the communal care and well-being of families. Sign up [here](#) to register for the call.

[Register](#)

Announcing Giving Day 2023



We are excited to announce that on May 3 - 4, the Center for Public Justice will be participating in Giving Day 2023! This 24-hour online event is a great way to get our CPJ community excited about sharing our mission, give locally to other nonprofits, and an amazing opportunity

to raise funds for CPJ which supports the work of Families Valued.

Have you been impacted by the work of Families Valued and appreciate the webinars and resources they provide? Mark your calendar and [join us!](#)

To learn more about Peer-to-Peer fundraising sign up for our email list [here](#).

Thank you for supporting CPJ and Families Valued in honoring God's call to work and family life!

[Learn More](#)

Thank You!

*From the Families Valued Advocacy Team: Rachel Anderson (Resident Fellow) * Madi Allen (CPJ Advocacy Manager) * Kathryn Freeman (CPJ Consultant) * Michelle Kirtley (CPJ Fellow, Co-chair, Association for Public Justice) * Chandler Robinson (CPJ Advocacy Intern)*

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