

January 24, 2007

We all know someone who has been affected by a birth defect. Often times, doctors are able to diagnose birth defects while the baby is still in the womb. In our case, we didn't know until our son was born that he had a cleft-lip. However, we were not alone. Within that year, there were three cleft lip babies born into our small neighborhood. How many of you know that the State of Utah leads the nation with 100 babies born with cleft lip and or palate each year in Utah? Our doctor immediately began telling us about the different procedures that could be taken to correct this defect. Now we knew what to do to fix it, but what caused it? Do any of you know what causes cleft lip? To understand what causes cleft lip, or any other birth defect, accurate data is required.

Still in a little shock, we began asking ourselves, was there anything my wife had done wrong during her pregnancy? We were unable to come up with anything. Though we don't consider ourselves victims, we still want some answers. Is there anything that we can do to prevent it from happening again? I hope none of you ever have to experience the feeling of handing your two month old baby to a surgeon that you've only met once before. And I definitely don't look forward to the mean kids at school. If you are a member of this exclusive club, you may not see your child as different. But if you are not a member, other children and adults, will treat your child very differently because they might look different, talk different, or walk different. We need to educate everyone in our state about birth defects. Birth defects happen to good people.

We as parents urge this committee to prioritize funding for the Utah Birth Defect Network. Birth defects are very common and cleft lip and palate prevalence is the highest in our country. Parents need continued support, the ability to connect with other families, more information and more studies, that will give us more answers. The Utah Birth Defects

Network is providing what we need as parents. It would be a huge mistake and disservice to pull some of the only support that we have as parents in being able to associate with different members of the Utah Birth Defect Network that are in the same situation as us. I ask you on behalf of all parents that have, and that ever will have, and possibly even some of your own family members that have or will have children born with birth defects to support us by funding the Utah Birth Defects Network.

Thank You.