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Media Contact:  
Sidewalk Advocates for Life  
Elisabeth Beall  
ebeall@sidewalkadvocates.org  
909-447-9604



## Statement on Pro-Life Activists Convicted under FACE Act

*"I trust their heart was likely in the right place, and I know the immense power and privilege of seeing a baby born to an abortion-vulnerable mom who changed her mind. But we disagree on the most effective way to save lives – and now these activists face a big cost: possibly a decade in federal prison."*

**Washington, D.C.** - Yesterday, a jury found five pro-life individuals guilty of illegally blockading an abortion facility in Washington, D.C. The pro-life individuals allegedly used chains, bike locks, and ropes to blockade the Washington Surgi-Clinic in 2020. This facility is the workplace of abortionist Cesare Santangelo, who admitted to [allowing babies to die](#) after they survived a failed abortion, and the same facility where five fully intact babies who appeared to have been killed late in pregnancy, possibly by illegal means, were found.

Lauren Muzyka, Esq., President and CEO of Sidewalk Advocates for Life, responded to the news:

I have met some of the individuals convicted; as an attorney, I understand the legal risks they took that fateful day in an attempt to stop abortions. I share the same sentiment in regards to abortion as they do: I hate the killing of preborn children. I trust their heart was likely in the right place, and I know the immense power and privilege of seeing a baby born to an abortion-vulnerable mom who changed her mind. But we disagree on the most effective way to save lives – and now these activists face a big cost: possibly a decade in federal prison. My heart breaks for their families, their future, and also for the pro-life outreach they could be doing if they had chosen different methods proven to help women. We are sad that women in America are not protected from a multi-billion-dollar abortion industry that stands at the ready to capitalize on their crisis, and that those who – though misguided in their approach – sought to

save the lives of children were instead on trial and now face jail time. We as a nation must do better to protect innocent preborn children from poisoning, dismemberment, and certain death and do more to aid women and men facing an unexpected pregnancy.

That said, as the founder, President & CEO of the nation's largest sidewalk outreach organization, dedicated to serving mothers and families on sidewalks in front of abortion and abortion-referral facilities, I must speak into this moment in history. We do not want to see this type of [aggressive, legally risky outreach](#) continue for a few reasons:

1. **Future pro-life outreach disappears if you ignore the law and go to jail**, especially in the current environment that is quick to persecute and prosecute pro-life efforts. We need dedicated pro-life individuals serving women in ways that are proven to save lives in the short and long term. We know through research, testimony, and experience that the best chance of actually reaching the heart of a mother in crisis and saving her innocent child is through a peaceful, calm, help-oriented approach as she thinks about her options and especially as she enters the abortion facility. Sadly, these five pro-life individuals – and anyone else who is convicted of violating the FACE Act – now face prison instead of availing themselves of countless future opportunities to interface with mothers in crisis and help connect them to America's renowned pregnancy resource centers.
2. **Former abortion clinic workers say this method doesn't work**. We know from former abortion workers and former Planned Parenthood executives like Abby Johnson that entering abortion facilities, barricading doors, and confronting staff and clients leads to workers branding pro-life individuals as untrustworthy and even dangerous. Moreover clients, understandably, do not know what to fully expect from those employing a law-breaking approach, and thus are inclined to further align with the abortion workers offering them what appears to be a peaceful "solution." It creates a unified force between the abortion industry and abortion-vulnerable women, instead of creating trust between the abortion-vulnerable woman and the Sidewalk Advocate that often develops through peaceful, winsome, legal sidewalk advocacy. Even more importantly, abortion workers have told us that, after experiencing an incident like this, women almost always reschedule their abortion – so no one is actually rescued from this trauma.

Sidewalk Advocates for Life alone has seen over 20,900 innocent children saved from abortion by supporting their mothers with compassion, resources, and professional care. [We do not see this type of victory from more aggressive and legally risky approaches, as our Advocates have witnessed firsthand](#). More simply, this approach does not lend itself to an opportunity to care for a mother in need as, instead, it leads to a prison cell. If we are serious about lasting change, **we must channel our righteous anger in the most productive and effective direction we can, utilizing an approach that has been proven to work**. Ending abortion in a community – as we've been privileged to see now 50 times, with the closure of the local abortion facility – is a slow, but sure climb: showing up consistently, serving the person in front of you, building trust in the community, and

partnering with the pregnancy-help movement to provide women with the abundance of resources available, locally and nationally.

3. **These aggressive approaches inspire buffer and bubble zone laws.** Historically, this type of aggressive behavior gives cities and states the fodder to create bubble or buffer zone ordinances that push peaceful, free-speech activities like prayer and sidewalk advocacy – activities that are saving lives every day – dozens of feet away from an abortion client or entrance to an abortion facility. This drastically decreases opportunities to effectively offer resources and support to abortion-vulnerable women. This is especially disheartening since [76% of women willingly admit that they would choose life if they were supported](#). Buffer and bubble zone laws – a form of viewpoint discrimination – put pro-life individuals in a difficult, if not impossible, position, forcing their peaceful, successful speech activities as far away as across the street, leaving few options to offer life-saving help to those in need.

As our nation finds itself in a post-*Roe v. Wade* era, it is heartbreaking that some states – and Washington DC, our nation's capital – have chosen to continue taking the lives of innocent children until the moment of birth. Personally, I find myself in a hard place as I want to see more individuals speaking up for the often forgotten preborn child and his mother; I don't want to see someone who has a heart for innocent life go to jail. However, it's paramount that our movement heads in the most productive direction possible. When we go to an abortion facility, our first goal should not be to make a public statement or do something that "feels" like we're moving the needle – but to do the most effective thing known to reach the heart of a mother in crisis and save her innocent child. Research, testimony, and experience over the last few decades consistently point to what saves lives and gradually ends abortion: peaceful outreach to mothers in crisis, connecting them with concrete help and resources, and maintaining our position as trustworthy guides in the midst of the journey.

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