

Statement of Mary Brune

I'm honored to be here today on behalf of pregnant women and nursing mothers in support of this important campaign. And it's my role as a mother that I'll be speaking from today.

Something happens to a woman when she learns she's pregnant. If she smokes, she'll quit; she'll limit her intake of fish high in mercury; she'll give up coffee and take up exercising—all measures to ensure her growing fetus has the best chance possible of being born healthy. If you've ever seen the Discovery channel, you know animal mothers are fierce protectors of their young; human mothers are no different. We strive to protect our children from both immediate and potential harm.

Why else would we strap our children into car seats? Or put latches on cabinets that contain sharp or otherwise dangerous objects? We do these things in the name of precaution. I learned of this notion from my own mother as "better safe than sorry", and it still sounds like good advice to me.

It's impossible, however, to anticipate all hazards, or to remove every danger. But when you encounter an obvious hazard, for example, a knife left unattended on the kitchen counter, there is a more urgent need for protection. It's this sense of urgency that brings me here today.

We *know* that radiation causes cancer. We *know* that toxic chemicals in our environment are crossing the placental barrier and are being detected in the umbilical cord blood of newborns. We know that prenatal exposures to chemicals like pesticides can result in disease, birth defects, and cancer. These are real and immediate threats; ones which mothers—no matter how fierce—are powerless against.

Current U.S. standards do provide protection from radiation for pregnant women in the workplace, provided they declare their pregnancies. While this is a step in the right direction, it is simply inadequate. It doesn't account for the period of time *before* a woman learns she is pregnant—a time when exposure to radiation could result in early miscarriage, or contribute to birth defects and disease.

And what about later on, after a woman returns to the workplace as a breastfeeding mother? Declaration or not, current U.S. regulations do not protect nursing mothers in the workplace. This is a huge gap that can be filled by implementing standards here that are currently in place in Europe.

Whether in our wombs or in our kitchens, we mothers strive to protect our children from any preventable danger. Mr. President, our children deserve, and we mothers demand, nothing less from you. Thank you.