

Testimony of Cathy Levy
MEMBER, Ohio Religious Coalition for Reproductive Choice
to the Health Committee of the Ohio House of Representatives
In Opposition to HB 258 – 9:00 AM, December 6, 2017

Chair Huffman; Vice-Chair Gavarone, Ranking Member Antonio, and members of the Health Committee:

I am Cathy Levy, of Hilliard, a member of the Ohio Religious Coalition for Reproductive Choice.

Thank you for welcoming my testimony in **opposition** to HB 258, a 6-week abortion ban which could effectively ban abortion in Ohio.

Like many of you, I come to you as a blessed person of faith.

If me or anyone in my family had an unwelcome or problem pregnancy and our choice be to end the pregnancy, I am blessed with the means to travel anywhere for a safe, legal abortion.

I am blessed with a strong support system so that other choices are open to me to parent that child or place it for adoption. I even have the resources to quit my job, if necessary, to carry out a problem pregnancy.

That important decision, with many options, is wide open to me and my family and likely available to you and yours.

Like many of you, I grew up in a home that emphasized making the RIGHT DECISIONS, as directed by our faith and our sense of right and wrong.

Isaiah 30:21 reads, *“And when you turn to the right or when you turn to the left, your ears shall hear a word behind you, saying, ‘This is the way; walk in it.’”*

For Christians, we know that when we listen to our conscience, our hearts, we are listening to the Holy Spirit, advising us of God’s will.¹

This will is summarized in the Greatest Commandment in the Bible: *to love God and to love your neighbor as yourself.*

¹ More verses from the Christian Scriptures on the power of the Holy Spirit within us can be found in Hebrews 10: ¹⁵*And the Holy Spirit also testifies to us, for after saying,* ¹⁶*“This is the covenant that I will make with them...I will put my laws in their hearts, and I will write them on their minds...¹⁹Therefore, my friends, since we have confidence ...²²let us approach with a true heart in full assurance of faith, with our hearts sprinkled clean from an evil conscience and our bodies washed with pure water.²³Let us hold fast to the confession of our hope without wavering, for he who has promised is faithful.”*

When we love our neighbors, we let them listen to their own consciences, the Holy Spirit, because that's what we would want for ourselves.

I'm also blessed in that my loved ones gave me the space to make my own decisions for my own life.

The life I chose was quite contrary to what people closest to me would have chosen, and yet, they set me free.

I'm a Christian, I married a Jewish guy.
Not normal for some.
Everyone, including my Presbyterian church, still welcomed me.

We decided not to have kids.
Not normal for some.
Everyone, even our parents, understood.

My loved ones used that Golden Rule — because they, too, would want the freedom to make decisions impacting their own lives.

Since I've been part of Ohio RCRC, I've heard countless stories about unexpected or challenging pregnancies.

In every case, a woman or a girl faces a KEY decision that impacts the course of her life. The decision impacts the life of her current family, her health, and even ability to bear children in the future.

This decision impacts her ability to live the life that she was gifted to lead. We must honor her ability to make that decision — to follow her conscience.

If we are honest with ourselves today, we know that even if this bill passes — even if abortion is outlawed — she may STILL decide to have an abortion, even if it's illegal in Ohio.

Because such decisions are holy, spiritual, life-impacting decisions.

If that woman is like me, or like you, or a woman in your inner circles, she will have the means to find safe, legal abortion health care out of Ohio.

If that woman is NOT like you or me,
If she doesn't have a car or money,
If she would lose her job if she took too much time off...

She might go to the back alley for an unsafe, illegal, scary abortion. She might end up maimed or even killed.

“Treat others as you would want to be treated.”

Would you want this for yourself or your sister? For anyone?

Would God want the coat hanger for his beloved daughter?

Think of the KEY decisions that dictated the course of **your own** life. Were you free to choose? Did that freedom help you get where you are today?

When a woman faces a problem pregnancy, the decision of how to proceed will impact the course of her life.

She needs the freedom to make this decision. And then, should she decide to end her pregnancy, she needs a safe, legal abortion — whether she is like you and me, or whether she has fewer resources than we do.

Please respect holy decision-making, and vote NO on the 6-week ban on abortion, HB 258.

Thank you for listening, and I welcome questions.