

My name is Kelly Helton. I am the equal rights advocate for the Tri-State Freethinkers. The Tri-State Freethinkers are the largest freethought group in Ohio and one of the most active in the country. We are against HB 258 the 6 week abortion ban!

HB 258 is unconstitutional and interferes with women's right to health care. This committee has the right to their own personal deeply held religious beliefs, but the committee doesn't have the right to impose those beliefs on the women of Ohio. The 6 week abortion ban imposes a particular religious belief on all women in Ohio. It is not based science. It is not based on medicine. We need policies in Ohio that are medically and scientifically accurate. We need policies that empower women, not ones that send us back to the dark ages.

If the goal of the committee is to reduce abortions in Ohio then let's have an honest conversation about how to do this without harming women. Ohio is one of only 2 states that does not require sexuality education. It is legal for groups to come into Ohio schools and lie to children about sex. It is happening every day. If you really wanted to reduce abortions and help women you would pass a law that requires sex education that is comprehensive and scientifically accurate that includes consent. If you truly wanted to reduce abortions in Ohio then contraceptives and birth control would be free and easily accessible. You would not defund Planned Parenthood you would increase funding for Planned Parenthood. States like Colorado have taken these steps and they reduced their teen pregnancy rate, STD, rate and teen abortions by 30-40%. Why are we wasting our time on abortion bans and restrictions that are harmful and unconstitutional, when we could be talking about real policy change that would accomplish what we both want, reduced teen pregnancy and reduced need for abortions.

In school I was taught that we have a government of the people, by the people, for the people. But when I look back and see 19 abortion restrictions in 6 years it seems like Ohio has a government of the men, by the men, for the men without regard for women.

The first time I was at the state house I had to hide in the back seat of my dad's car after my mom told me I couldn't go because it was not safe due to counter protesters. When we got there and the counter protestors barged into the room, my dad & I got separated and I ended up by podium next to the senators and my dad was on the other side of the room. My mom saw me on the news with my dad nowhere in sight and he got in so much trouble, but I never did. At that moment I decided I would no longer be silent and my voice would be heard. Since then I have had the opportunity to travel the country speaking about equal rights and as a 13 year old girl, I often find myself to be the voice of reason in a room full of unreasonable adults. I hope this is not the case today and you will vote no on HB 258!