

Katie Burgess
House Bill 258
Opponent Testimony
Ohio Senate Health, Human Services, and Medicaid Committee
December 5, 2018

Chairman Burke, Vice Chair Beagle, Ranking Member Tavares, and members of the Health, Human Services and Medicaid Committee:

Thank you for allowing me to testify today. My name is Katie Burgess and I urge you to please be respectful of all women and reject House Bill 258, the six-week abortion ban. There are many reasons why a woman deserves the right to choose to do what is best for her mind, body, and spirit.

On October 12, 2015, I was ecstatic as I headed to my 20-week doctor appointment. My husband and I had arranged a get together with friends and family that evening for a big gender reveal party for our first child. During this routine ultrasound visit, we heard my doctor say the words you never want to hear "huh, this doesn't seem right". Our doctor immediately sent us to the Maternal Fetal ward where we learned our first child, a very wanted baby boy, suffered from anencephaly, an extreme neural tube defect with zero percent chance of life outside of the womb.

As we sat in the doctor's office crying uncontrollably, our maternal-fetal doctor gave us three options: 1. to carry the pregnancy full term and deliver a stillborn baby, 2. induce birth, with a high probability of suffering 36 hours of labor and deliver a stillborn baby, 3. terminate the pregnancy. I was 19-weeks and five days pregnant and luckily, after the 24-hour waiting period, I fell under the 20-week law to choose the right to terminate my pregnancy. If my appointment had been a day later, this choice would have been taken away from me.

I knew that mentally and physically I could not go through with option one or two. The thought of carrying my son full term only to give birth to a baby who would not take a breath of air was unbearable to me. As well as the idea of being induced enduring 36-hours of labor and delivering my stillborn baby boy - what a horrific first labor and delivery experience.

I know many people may disagree with the choice I made; however, most of those people have never or will never be in my position. I was a 33-year-old responsible, healthy, and successful woman who was over the moon excited, with her equally excited husband, about welcoming their first child into this world. In an instant, we were heartbroken to learn our child had an unpreventable neural tube defect - nothing we did had caused this. In our case, this defect gave our child, our son, a zero percent chance of life outside the womb. No one, especially not a politician, should tell me what I was allowed to do with my body. No one but my husband and I knew the pain and physical and mental stress that I endured or could have endured even more if I was not given the right to choose.

I feel the majority of the people who support this bill are ignorant to all of the facts, such as my story. We are living in a society that can't take care of its children now - children who are born to unloving and abusive parents, children who are born into poverty, foster children who can't find a decent home, homeless children, children who are sold into sex trafficking rings, or children who are the product of incest or rape. If the people supporting this bill are willing to adopt, foster and/or raise every one of these kids and give them the love, emotional support, and therapy they need, then I can understand why they want you to support this bill. Or, if the people supporting this bill can guarantee that both women and men who will not have the right to choose will receive adequate and paid mental health therapy, then again, I can understand why they want you to support this bill. However, I can make a safe bet that many of these people are not willing to do this, nor are they willing to have their taxes raised to enhance or create the social and mental health programs needed to properly care for them.

Chairman Burke, Vice Chair Beagle, Ranking Member Tavares, and members of the Health, Human Services and Medicaid Committee, I again urge you to stop this bill.

Like my story, abortions are not only used to end "unwanted" pregnancies. Abortions are medically necessary, they can prevent a woman from enduring lifelong emotional stress or they may prevent another kid from being abused or going hungry. So please be respectful of all women and each of their stories. Because of no matter the reason, it should only be the woman's right to decide what to do with her body, mind, and spirit.