

Emily Heiden
HB 258 – Six-Week Abortion Ban
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 Emily Heiden and I am a doctoral student studying English, Comparative Literature, and Creative Writing at the University of Cincinnati. I also teach writing courses at the university.

I am here today to oppose this bill because five years ago I had an abortion at six-weeks. I discovered I was pregnant when I was 29 years old and in graduate school. The man who got me pregnant was not interested in having a child. I realized that if I continued the pregnancy, I would have to drop out of my master's program. I had no family in the state and no support. I had always dreamed of being a professor and getting a PhD. I relied on my university funding and on student loans to get by. This was no way to support a child. I had always dreamed of being married as well when I started a family. I had always dreamed of having a husband who wanted the baby too. And although I felt a real connection to this pregnancy, I realized I could not continue it and go on with graduate school. As 1 in 4 American women by age 45 do, I decided to end my pregnancy. Because I made the choice to have an abortion, I was able to finish my master's degree and go on for my doctorate after being accepted at the University of Cincinnati. I am now in year three out of four in my PhD. I know that this would never have been possible if I had become a mother when I was not ready.

I recognized that I was pregnant around the four-week mark, and I ended my pregnancy at six-weeks and 1 day. This means that if a ban like this had existed at that time, I would not have been able to end my pregnancy. I can hardly write that sentence. I suppose I would have traveled out of state to access an abortion if I'd had to, but I likely would have lost my summer job in the process, because I was teaching that summer, and we had no substitutes. I'd been told that if I missed a day of work I would be fired. Also, I had a car, which would have made travel possible. But there are so many women who don't have cars or the ability to go out of state. The bottom line is I cannot imagine living in a place that would force me to continue a pregnancy I felt in my bones I needed to end. I felt a level of panic that summer that I have never known before or sense. I felt like my body was a runaway train that I was no longer in charge of. It was terrifying. I am in charge of my body. I am in control of my body. No government body owns it. Women have the right to autonomy. Banning abortion does not stop us from ending pregnancies, and it would not have stopped me from ending mine. It just would have made me more panicked and desperate in the process. It would have put me in a dangerous position. But no law could have made me continue my pregnancy.

Thank you again for allowing me to testify. I'm happy to answer any questions you have.