

Jesi Smith Testimony – Proponent of S.B. 23 Ohio House Health Committee – 3/19/2019

My name is Jesi Smith and this is my 10 year old daughter Faith Smith. I am the mother of five children and an advocate for disabled children through the organization Save the 1. I am here to speak for hundreds of families like mine and their children who, like Faith, who are unable to speak for themselves. I encourage the Ohio Legislature to pass the Heartbeat bill and protect the lives of disabled children without exception. Children with disability should have equal protection under the law.

My daughter was diagnosed with what doctors often call a ‘fatal fetal abnormality’ through routine testing during pregnancy. In an appointment with a geneticist we were told Faith had Trisomy 18, a chromosomal abnormality, that he described it as a ‘fatal fetal anomaly’ and said she was ‘incompatible with life’. Even if Faith lived even to a year old, we were told her life would destroy our marriage, devastate the lives of our four older children, and ruin our finances. Three times within a half an hour appointment he pushed us to have an abortion even though we told him we wanted our daughter, even if she had disability. In the ten years working with other families and finding them doctors who will treat their children we have heard this same type of story over and over. We have been to birthday parties, the zoo and the park with scores of these so called ‘fatal fetal anomalies’. In a rapidly changing field with so much hope and innovation these dire medical predictions prove that the field medicine is a practice not an exact science.

Prenatal tests have become search and destroy missions for disabled children in the womb. Any identifiable problem is being used to wipe out an entire group of valuable people. These tests should not be used to single out and discriminate against disabled children.

Over 90% of children with Trisomy 18 are being aborted. If even 10 % of any society whether through war, famine, or disease is wiped out that group of people is said to have been decimated. With over 90% of children like Faith being

purposely wiped out by abortion what other word than genocide do I have to use?

Medical guesses of the length and quality of their patient's lives are at best a guess and at their worst used as justification to single out the disabled for destruction and lethal neglect. A doctor who identifies a physical/mental problem of a child in the womb, declares that medical problem incurable, and takes the life of the patient has been given the power of judge, jury, and executioner. My daughter's disability does not take degrade her humanity. It should be a self-evident truth that she is a valuable human being and should be afforded under the law life, liberty, and due process like any other citizen.

I plead with this group as I do with Faith's doctors – do not be in the business of destroying lives instead save these precious children. Good government like good medicine should be the protectors of the lives of the disabled and humblest of their citizens and patients. Killing the sick because they might die is horrific and appalling policy whether from a hospital or government. The sick and disabled children inside and outside of the womb are not sub-human – they have lives worth living.

If powerful interest groups come in demanding you make the disabled, who they label as 'fatal fetal anomalies' an exception to this bill remember Faith -- she is exactly the type of child they are ruthlessly targeting. Where will my family and all the others I know go for help if medical caregivers and legislators cannot be trusted to protect the disabled? Make the care and protection of every child the rule and standard and maintain the decent compassionate laws of a civilized people.

It is the legitimate and first object of any good government to care for the lives of their people not destroy them. The measure of any great society is how it treats its most vulnerable citizens.

Children like Faith may have had a tough break but they have an awful lot to live for. I urge you to pass SB23 without exceptions. Help me keep my Faith and every child like her.