

House Committee Opponent Testimony
March 26, 2019

House Chair Merrin, Ranking Member Janine R. Boyd and members of the House Health, Committee my name is Amanda and I am here to talk about the Senate Bill 23 (the six week abortion ban) and how it endangers the lives of and restricts decision making for women.

Pregnancy was difficult for me with lingering morning sickness and unexplained bleeding. Labor was equally as difficult, as I was induced after my water unexplainably broke three weeks early.

I struggled severely with breastfeeding my child, I was barely sleeping or eating and at about five weeks after my son Henry was born I realized I was suffering from horrifying postpartum depression. Because of the stigma around mental health issues, especially postpartum depression I kept it to myself and as a result had a mental break at about 4 months postpartum.

When my husband and I found out I was pregnant for the second time, I didn't feel particularly excited, and that quickly turned to sheer terror, regret and anxiety. I felt suicidal, I was scared for myself, my husband and my son. I did not tell anyone that I was pregnant and I did not tell my husband about how I was feeling until about two weeks later. I have always been pro-choice, however, did not ever think it would be a decision I would make for myself. We have no idea what we will do when faced with the actual decision, how can we legislate what EVERYONE must do when facing this very PERSONAL, and private decision.

After a long discussion, my husband and I decided the risk of going through what we went through with Henry and my postpartum depression, this time with two kids, was not something that made sense for our family. I did not want Henry to be an only child, however, I also did not want him to be without his mother. I am still asked on a fairly consistent basis "when are you having another one" or "Is he your ONLY one?" I thought having a second child would be fine, but it came apparent that it could end VERY badly and so I made what I consider to be the harder choice. Maybe the hardest decision I have ever made, but it was MY decision to make!

I confirmed I was pregnant by an initial consult at Planned Parenthood, at this bills cut off at 6 weeks, however, because of the "waiting" period my next appointment was two weeks after that and I was forced beyond that point, to over eight weeks before I could access care.

My husband and I did not have the resources to add another person to our family, financially, without close local family support and I was in a toxic work environment. We are still not at a place where adding another person would make sense. We are both currently working two jobs and had I not had access to abortion care I can only imagine the infinite struggles our family would be facing today. We are able to provide more for our son and focus on his future to ensure we continue to thrive as a family of three.

EVERY single person I have told (friends, family, peers) have been supportive...several people have even commended for making the "harder" decision.

Anti-abortion activists and pro-life politicians like to talk about how abortion causes people to feel nothing but guilt and regret and the trauma of the abortion is too much to bear. I stand here today to tell you I do NOT regret my decision! I am confident that it was the RIGHT decision for not only me but my family!

There was no one other than my husband and I present when I got pregnant and where would the STATE have been to help support my family financially, emotionally had I not been able to fight the suicidal ideations or the likely postpartum depression a second time. Had I not had access to abortion care the impact on my life, my husband's life and my son's life would have been great, and even could have ended my life.

Everyday women in our society are told that you get pregnant, you have a baby and life is grand, and that is the case for some women, but not ALL women. For some women getting pregnant at the wrong time or with the wrong partner is the case, while others may not have had a say in getting pregnant, as instances of incest and rape are all too common. We must allow women the space and respect to make the right decisions for their own situations. The state should not dictate or be able to dictate what the right decision is.

The bottom line is the reasons behind the decision to have an abortion are as varied as the individuals that have them, and again NO ONE'S business. The reason is not for any of us to judge or decide if it's a good enough reason. Quite honestly the fact that this bill was introduced at all, let alone has made it this far is appalling.

NO ONE has the right to tell me what to do with MY BODY and I say that for not just myself, I say that on behalf of ALL women who could be affected by this irresponsible bill.