

Opponent Testimony

Topic: SB 23

Ohio House Health Committee

Hearing Date: March 26, 2019

Witness: Beth Workman

Chairman Merrin, Vice Chair Manning, Ranking Member Boyd, and House Health committee members:

My name is Beth Workman from Chillicothe. I stand before you today as a woman, a daughter of an amazing woman, a granddaughter of two admirably strong women, a sister to three other loving mothers, an aunt to seven young women, a cousin to 10 Thompson/Crabtree women, but most importantly — a mother and grandmother to two daughters and soon to be three granddaughters. There is nothing more important to me than being an advocate for my daughters and granddaughters.

I stand here today to represent all of these women, as well as the rights of women in the United States. I'm here to protest Senate Bill 23 and what it really is all about.

It is an attack on women — on our constitutional right to have control over our bodies; our constitutional right to pursue our life, liberty, and pursuit of happiness; and our constitutional right to follow our own religious convictions. It is this religious freedom that I am going to concentrate on.

This country was started on the principle of religious freedom. Our founding ancestors left their countries, made the trek across the Atlantic Ocean, and began their life in a new country — all for their desire for religious freedom. And religious freedom is what is being attacked in Senate Bill 23 — my freedom to follow my god of choice, my freedom to follow my god's commandments in my own way, and my freedom to decide what my god's commandments mean in my life.

My freedom; not your freedom. You have the right to decide how your god guides your life, but not how you want your god to control my life. And that is what is proposed today; you want your belief in your god to control my life. Our U.S. Constitution even gives me the right to decide if I don't want any god to guide my life decisions. You are wasting the time of this General Assembly and the tax money of the people of Ohio to fight against my Constitutional rights.

And I don't want to hear how this bill is about being pro-life. If you were pro-life, you would be doing the things that really help people's lives: higher minimum wages, health care for all, family leave, and equal educational opportunities for ALL children. Many of you in this assembly have been fighting these pro-life policies for years. These are the policies that will make the lives of people better.

And we all know that if what you want to do is to help reduce the number of abortions in our state, the best way to do this is to provide free, readily available birth control to women. Our state just decided to take all state money away from Planned Parenthood, the organization that

has provided these services to women for years. If this bill was about reducing abortions, you would not have cut this money. This money is vital to reducing abortions.

This leads me to my original point. This bill is an affront to my religious freedom. This bill is trying to make your religious beliefs more important than my religious beliefs. This bill is about you trying to have control over the rights of women to lead their lives in the way that they choose. Our suffragist sisters devoted their lives to these rights. We've been fighting this fight for years and we refuse to stop fighting now.

Most people think that one either has to be pro-life or pro-choice. I consider myself both.

What could this look like in our state political system? It would be providing free, readily available birth control to all women who want it. This is the number way to reduce abortions. It would allow women to decide whether or not they want to continue their pregnancy with the advice of their doctor. It would also be supporting the women who choose to continue their pregnancies even though they don't want to be a mother. This support should include prenatal care, shelter, food, counseling, and a stipend to help with any pregnancy-related issues.

The money to pay for this support could come from an affordable state-run adoption agency to place these children in loving homes. I've heard that there are many couples who would like to adopt, but can't afford it. More help could also come from sponsorships with churches or other community groups.

Many people say they're pro-life; let's give them the opportunity to do something about it. We could start a pro-life commission that works with these community groups to provide help for the pregnant women-not just force them to continue their pregnancies. This should not be about punishing these women; this should be about helping them. Instead of fighting, I think both sides, pro-life and pro-choice, can work together to truly make life better.

This is truly being pro-life. Please, let's stop fighting and start trying to solve this.

I respectfully ask you to vote against SB 23, and let the women of our state make their own decisions — god-inspired or not — about their own lives.