

Mary Rohrer Dexter
Senate Bill 23 – Six-Week Abortion Ban
Opponent Testimony
Ohio House Health Committee
March 26, 2019

Chairman Merrin, Vice Chair Manning, Ranking Boyd, and Members of the Ohio House Committee,

I am a mother, a grandmother and a registered nurse. My sense of family is strong. I consider my time raising my children as the most rewarding and important years of my life. And I strongly oppose Senate Bill 23. Please allow me to explain why.

In 1983 I found myself in a difficult situation. I was married and had infant twins. My husband was an airman the USAF. After my twins were born the base medical clinic had provided me with a diaphragm as the method of birth control I was too use. This method of birth control requires a couple to plan ahead and insert the device prior to sex or to stop after starting foreplay and insert it. My husband and I were 26, so old enough to know better, but the diaphragm is not effective when it remains in the bureau drawer. Soon I was pregnant again and the twins were turning one year old. My husband did not react well. He clearly explained he did not want the two kids he had let alone a third one and told me to get the hell out of his house. So I was 26 with two infants and pregnant.

Luckily for me in 1983 I had choices. I could carry the baby to term and raise three kids alone or I could end the pregnancy. In fact my own mother asked me if I would consider an abortion. I chose to have my youngest son. But the fact that it was my choice had a profound impact on my mothering. Had I been forced to take on this overwhelming responsibility with no options my attitude would not have been very good. I would have been extremely resentful. It made all the difference to our little family that I was able to make a decision.

Life is complicated. Many women who seek abortions are married with children at home. Every family is different and has a different set of circumstances. For blanket legislation to make rules that are not individual to each situation is inappropriate. Senators and congressmen usually do not have a medical background. A woman and her doctor are the people who need to evaluate the mental and physical health of the entire family and decide what is the best decision for all involved.

Making abortion illegal is not an effective way to end abortion. Education and effective, available birth control will decrease the need for it. But life does not follow a particular predetermined play book and unplanned stuff happens. Removing the choice to end a pregnancy in this state will cause those women who can afford it to travel to another state when they decide that ending the pregnancy is the best alternative for them. Women who can't afford this luxury of travel will seek an illegal alternative. Often illegal equates with unsafe.

Few women realize they are pregnant by six weeks. Senate Bill 23 would essentially make abortion illegal in Ohio. Please vote no on this unconstitutional bill. In April of 1992, I marched in Washington DC along with 500,000 other women in a march sponsored by the National Organization For Women. The button on my shirt said "Woman by Nature. Mother by Choice." It is my wish that all children be "chosen babies". The relationship between a mother and her child is healthiest when a mom is on board with the task.