

**Jasmine Henderson**  
**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, thank you for allowing me to testify today. My name is Jasmine Henderson. I am caretaker, college graduate and local activist from Dayton, OH. I am strongly opposed to Senate Bill 23. In the state of Ohio, there is an estimated 5,919,391 women making up 51% of the state's population. Based upon this information and since women make the majority of Ohio's population, all women's rights issues, including access to safe abortion is a human rights issue that will have an effect on familial health and Ohio's economic and competitive future. What I see when I look at Senate Bill 23 is our governing body stating they don't trust the majority of Ohioans to make effective and competent choices. This is counterintuitive to what other statistics say about women in the State of Ohio and my goal is to paint a clear picture about just who we are. Women make up 66.3% of the voting population, participating in election cycles at rates of 55.8%. We are 59% of the working force with an average income of \$36,000 annually. Approximately 306,824 or 27.7% of all women are business owners. We hold professional occupations/ managerial positions at a rate of over 36.4% and women make up the majority of all college students in the state of Ohio. More than a fourth of all women in the state of Ohio are also college educated. Outside of my emphasis that women obviously have the intellectual, emotional and social capacity to manage decisions about their lives, bodies and families effectively, I find myself asking about Ohio's future without women? The passage of this bill implies the expectation that women will remain in Ohio and will continue to contribute at present rates if this bill becomes law. But with women in the majority, making up 59% of the workforce and becoming the fastest group of educated persons in Ohio, women won't wait for Ohio to catch up to our needs, we'll leave. I think this committee must ask itself, are we willing to lose the economic and fiscal burden that the women shoulder by simply being the majority? This committee must ask itself to listen to women and understand what an equitable and safe state looks like and how do we compare or compete with surrounding states? How can we trust women to be business owners, tax payers, voters, matriculate through college, hold office and be community leaders, but we can't trust them to manage their families or their lives? I think women have proven, based on these statistics that are not only are we the backbone for the state of Ohio, but that losing one woman through relocation or death would have drastic effects on the social, emotional, and fiscal future of both the families and the state of Ohio. With the passage of Senate Bill 23, this governing body is telling women that we are not equal citizens and our contributions are not important.

According to the Ohio Office of Budget and Management's report published on July 11, 2018, that has information about the previous fiscal year, the state of Ohio generated \$ 8.4 billion of personal income tax from Ohio. With 2,826,205 or 59% of the workforce being women, we easily accounted for half of the generation of taxable personal income for the state of Ohio. This statement should be taken within the context that women made this contribution while still making 77 cents less on the dollar compared to men in Ohio and because of this wage gap, women lost an estimated \$29.6 billion in wage generation last year. So again, can the State of Ohio afford to live without women? Can the State of Ohio afford for the contributions of women to be further stifled by the unique sociological and political devastation of this bill? I also

speak for the many women who don't have a choice based upon the unique ways that gender, race and poverty effect women in the state of Ohio. According to the Columbus Dispatch in 2011, single parent households increased significantly between the 2000 and 2010 census. In the year 2000, 71% of all households with children were married, decreasing to 65% in the year 2010. We also know that 18% of all women in the state of Ohio and 36% of all African American women in Ohio live in poverty. These same women tend to disproportionately be mothers, leading single parent households at a rate of 27% and 11.4 % of those households being impoverished. This means effectively that over 587,000 families are headed by women and 188,612 of them live below the poverty level. As you add race into the feminization of poverty, we understand just how devastating Senate Bill 23 can be on the personal and professional lives of women who need help and support the most. When we look at women who are already impoverished and further disenfranchised by race, we are also looking at women who in many ways already don't have a choice. Is the state of Ohio willing to create standards that push these women further into poverty and eliminating the already small chance of economic viability by taking away their right to choose what happens to them?

Women are literally leading Ohio, not just in economic contributions or academically, but by sheer numbers. The future direction of Ohio depends on the health of women. Women must be listened when we say having the right to choose what happens to our bodies, our lives and what our families look like are important to us and it is our right. It must be understood that with 66.3 % of the voting age population being female, that our memories are long and so is our right to exercise our vote. I ask you to consider my testimony and vote no on this dangerous bill. Thank you again for the opportunity to testify. I will now take any questions you have.