

Testimony in opposition SB 23
Ohio House Health Committee
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Good afternoon Chair Merrin, Vice-chair Manning, Ranking Member Boyd and members of the committee. My name is Judi Moseley and I am here as a private citizen and as a member of the board of NARAL Pro-Choice Ohio. For more than 30 years I was a program administrator for Women's Health and Sexual Assault and Domestic Violence Prevention at the Ohio Department of Health. After my retirement as a program administrator in women's health I worked in the field of opioid overdose prevention.

I am here to speak in opposition to Ohio Senate Bill 23. During my time working in the above-mentioned positions I travelled across Ohio and spoke to numerous women and men on a range of health topics including reproductive health. Based on that experience it became clear to me that one of the most critical elements affecting the health and economic stability of a woman and for families is the ability to determine when and if to have children. This has also been established by many studies over decades that document the potentially negative effects of childbearing on health and economic status. Thus, for many women, the most responsible and humane decision is to not have a child that she is not able or prepared to take care of.

I have three points to make in opposition to this bill:

1. **It violates the principle of separation of church and state:** This principle is included in the first Amendment to the Constitution which states, in part, that "*Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof...*" In addition, the American principle of separation between church and state is based on a letter from Thomas Jefferson in "separation between church & state" written in 1802; addressed to the Danbury Baptist Association in Connecticut, and published in a Massachusetts newspaper. With this bill you, as government officials, are imposing your religious beliefs, your religious interpretation of the Bible, your religious opinions on the rest of us and, what is most disturbing, legislating those beliefs, mandating that we all must live under your beliefs. This is in direct opposition to the earliest tenets of the foundation of this country and is a very un-American practice.
2. **It is elitist:** This bill and the decision to support it assumes that the few of you know what is best for all of the rest of us. You are arrogantly disregarding and dismissing the life circumstances of the people who have made the decision that an abortion is in the best interest of all concerned. It forces women and families to have children they are not prepared to care for emotionally, mentally or financially. This bill should actually be

called the “Forced Parenthood” bill as the result of a ban on abortions after six weeks as proposed by this bill, when most women don’t even realize they are pregnant, is in effect forcing women (and their partners or spouses when present) into parenthood that very likely will threaten their economic stability and health and by extension the stability of their extended families and community.

3. **The bill endangers babies and children not to mention the health of**

women: According to the National Children’s Alliance, an estimated 683,000 children (unique incidents) were victims of abuse and neglect in 2015, the most recent year for which there is national data. Approximately 3.4 million children received an investigation or alternative response from child protective services agencies. 2.3 million children received prevention services. Of the children who experienced maltreatment or abuse, three-quarters suffered neglect; 17.2% suffered physical abuse; and 8.4% suffered sexual abuse. **A parent of the child victim was the perpetrator in 78.1% of substantiated cases of child maltreatment.** In fact, there were two stories focused on abuse of children in the *Columbus Dispatch* on March 21, 2019 that illustrate this very point. One took place in Doylestown, PA and the other in Los Angeles. Often this neglect and abuse are related to circumstances of substance abuse, untreated mental illness and/or poverty. This illustrates the stress on families and underscores my point that women need to be able to determine if they are ready mentally, emotionally and financially to have a child.

In conclusion, I am strongly opposed to this bill that imposes your will on the rest of us and mandates parenthood as it jeopardizes the health and economic stability of women, children and their families.