

Date: March 24, 2019

TO: Chairman Derek Merrin, Ohio House Health Committee

From: Dr. Julia Watson

Re: Testimony on SB 23

I am unable to be present on March 26 because I will be out of state but wish to have my testimony introduced, as follows.

I am Professor Julia Watson, an emeritus faculty member from The Ohio State University. I am shocked that the Ohio legislature is considering the regressive and repressive measure of a ban on abortion after six weeks of pregnancy. Abortion, as a safe and legal procedure, is a right of choice for women upheld by the US constitution. As an educator and grandmother, I note:

- 1) Ohio has declared that it seeks to retain and recruit women professionals and to support the flourishing of women with families in good jobs. But by returning to a 19th-century standard of state control of women's bodies, it is sending a message that women are not fully enfranchised, voting citizens with the right to choose, in consultation with their doctors, the best path when a pregnancy occurs. As an emeritus faculty member at, I am aware that choice is a fundamental criterion that women note when considering states in which it would be desirable to start or continue their careers.
- 2) As a former associate dean in charge of recruitment and diversity at OSU, I am also well aware that women candidates often pose questions about the state "climate" for women and families. Indeed, some told me that their decisions about whether Ohio would work well for them depended on whether there is active and ongoing state support of the legal right to choose and whether there is support for clinics that offer family planning and health care for poor and working women of the kind provided by Planned Parenthood.
- 3) My own professional career would not have been possible without being able to choose whether and when to have a child. Unfortunately, because I was a student in the mid-1960s, abortion was illegal in the US. I was well aware of the dangers of illegal procedures because my mother's sister had died at 26 of an illegal abortion in Detroit. Given my precarious situation as a student, I chose to travel to Japan for a legal abortion in June 1967. It was right to make that choice at that time, just as it was right to later choose to have a child when my profession afforded me the economic support and maturity to bring one into the world. As I also think of my former students as my "children," I am grateful that I was able to make a choice that supported all my children.

It saddens me that Ohio is being blindly led by partisans who respect neither the US constitution nor the status of women as full citizens. I shudder to think that the Ohio policy will return women to either seeking dangerous, illegal procedures or leaving the state for more supportive environments. And lack of state support for Planned Parenthood undercuts efforts to reduce infant mortality and violence against women, while providing early screening for cancer and HIV. What a misguided effort! This proposed bill is a frivolous waste of the time and money

with which taxpayers fund our legislators. Please reject it at once and turn your collective attention to more important measures for protecting the welfare and enhancing the economic and cultural options of all our citizens.

Dr. Julia Watson
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