

Jennifer Lopez
Senate Bill 23 – Six-Week Abortion Ban
Opponent Testimony
Ohio House Health Committee
March 26, 2019

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

Thank you for allowing me to testify today. My name is Jennifer Lopez and I am a lifelong Ohio resident, have been married to the same man for 30 years – also a lifelong Ohio resident, we are the parents of two college aged daughters, and I am the former chief of women’s health for the state health department – an office created by Republican Ohio State Senator Karen Gilmore in the 1990s – where I proudly served under Governors Voinovich, Taft and Strickland until the Office was disbanded due to budget cuts.

This makes me uniquely qualified to testify today because of the abortion data I am familiar with due to the nature of my work in the Ohio Office of Women’s Health, as well as the antidotal accounts that I am privy to. For a multitude of professional and personal reasons, I stand opposed to Senate Bill 23.

I can repeat the solid statistics that show most abortions are necessary due to sexual molestation or medical factors (and my estimate is 95% or higher), that the reason some statistics aren’t recorded as this high is because the females obtaining abortions aren’t reporting accurately out of fear of their accuser or other factors involved in their situation, and that evidence exists that if Planned Parenthood resources were available inside every school health clinic we could capture at least 50% of the abuse, and therefore the abortions, before they occur.

But statistics don’t seem to be of interest to politicians these days and so I’m going to discuss a couple of real life examples of how abortion scenarios play out and why it’s incredibly important that abortion services stay legal, SAFE, and widely available in Ohio. Young women’s lives are at stake here, which is why abortion was finally legalized in 1973.

I was standing in line at Kroger in Mansfield just the other night behind a girl about 14-15 years old and a man about 35-45 years old. It was clear to me, because of my training and experience, that there was going to be a sexual encounter between them very soon. The girl had the mental capacity of probably a 7 or 8 year old, maybe, and the man maybe 14 or 15 years old. The male might have been the mom’s boyfriend, a cousin, a friend or a neighbor, but he was definitely a predator. When that young woman gets pregnant – and she will – she will not fit neatly into the storybook tale proffered by the Right To Life community of securing a nice, older female confidant who can walk her through the pregnancy, making sure it’s healthy along the way, and caring for the girl until she can be convinced to give up her baby to loving adopted parents.

Instead, the girl will be sexually abused until she gives birth, her mom will not have the foggiest idea of how to handle the situation because she isn’t much brighter than her daughter, the mother will likely add on to the abuse, and the man, who knows? He will continue sexually abusing this young girl as well as many others in all probability. In any case, the baby will be born into an abusive, poverty stricken situation, it will NOT be adopted out, its mental faculties

unable to meet school or work demands – ever in its life - and the cycle of sexual molestation and pregnancy, with girls living in fear, filth and scum for their entire lives, will repeat. These are simply the facts based on the statistical evidence. The happy “adoption story” is a misnomer in 100% of these cases.

At the other end of the abortion spectrum, is a 67-year-old woman living in a Gahanna skilled nursing facility just up I-670 from here. Her deeply damaged mother and stepfather, living just south of German Village at the time, raised her. I visit her when I can and take her candy. Growing up, her stepfather had sex with her frequently, and when she got pregnant and started to show (which is when her father knew she was pregnant), he beat her on her back with a board until she miscarried. Her mother ignored or avoided these beatings as life went on.

One time, when she thinks she was about 14 or 15, she didn't miscarry until she was very far along. She thinks it was about seven or eight months' pregnant but of course she can't be sure because she was so young at the time. She remembers being beaten for months and months to no avail. Finally, she miscarried. If you've ever miscarried or had a spouse miscarry, you know the pain, the blood, and in some cases, the terror. This young woman miscarried, alone, in her home, and my friend doesn't know if the fetus was living or dead when her father took it away and buried it in their back yard where it still is today.

These stories are the rule, not the exception, and so when I hear about the crocodile tears from people wanting to have burials for aborted babies, it tells me how uninformed & far removed they are from the actual scenarios around abortion situations. This woman, like most, was shamed and threatened into never discussing her circumstances. Again, if PP were enabled – instead of disabled – young women would stand a chance against these predatory monsters. And we certainly know by the thousands upon thousands of accounts from the Catholic, Southern Baptist and fundamentalist churches that these monsters are creeping around our young women (and young men) at alarming rates.

Another account that haunts me every day is a phone call I once received in my office from a young woman in Whitehall Ohio: the woman called and I could hear babies crying and kind of talking in the background. They sounded very cute. The woman, who was about 24 years old, explained that she had to talk quickly because she would get in trouble by her husband if he knew she was calling. She was pregnant with their fourth child and she feared for the children's and her own life. She did not under any circumstances want to bring another life into their situation. They were often hungry and shared one car, as a typical control measure by her husband.

Her husband insisted on silence at all times. When the babies made noise, he flicked them on their heads with his fingers. If they wouldn't stop making noise, he would kick or hit or otherwise abuse his wife before the children. He would not allow her to refuse sex, and he would never allow birth control of any kind because of his religion. She pleaded for help, at which point I was fortunately able to safely get her in touch with a trained and confidential contact at PP. This situation is as COMMON as it is untenable.

In addition, and from a personal perspective, I mentioned I have two daughters. When one of my daughters was at a Young Life party in New Albany about four years ago, there were drugs and alcohol there. My daughter's friend, who imbibed, was asked by one of the boys to follow him out to his car, where he told her he was a virgin and wanted to have sex with her to lose his virginity. When she told him no, he got aggressive, and forced her head down onto his penis for

oral sex. Another member of Young Life – a female – stood outside the car and took pictures with her phone.

The young woman has since gone through years of therapy, discussions, unsteady grades, PTSD, issues with the church, problems at school, and a host of other difficulties which is common for these scenarios. I praised her for having the strength to “not have sex” with him, which is pathetic and disturbing in itself that we have to reward our girls for standing up for themselves against sexual assault vs demanding accountability from the boys in our society, but there are millions upon millions of girls who don’t have the strength or can’t find it at the time and end up pregnant. To suggest that these girls should have to then pay some price by remaining pregnant on top of the multitude of other penalties they will face after sexual assault, is absurd. Especially when the products of conception can be safely removed from a young woman’s uterus long before an embryo even forms into the shape of a chewed piece of gum. Whose LIFE are we protecting?

These situations are a few among millions. These are why abortion was legalized in the first place, and why it is imperative that it stay legal and safe. If there is anyone who would like to discuss the data, the FACTS, my many years in the trenches of women’s health & domestic violence, or anything else, I’m happy to meet during your office hours.

I ask that you vote NO on this very uninformed, cruel & inhumane bill. Thank you and I will take any questions you may have.

Jennifer Lopez
Former Chief of Women’s Health
Former Director of Medicaid Quality
Public Health Expert
Women’s Health Expert
State of Ohio