

Opponent Testimony

Topic: SB 23

Ohio House Health Committee

Hearing Date: March 26, 2019

Witness: Rev. Lois Powell

Chairman Merrin, Vice Chair Manning, Ranking Member Boyd, and House Health Committee members:

My name is Lois Powell. I am an ordained minister in the United Church of Christ and the former Chair of the Board of Directors of the national Religious Coalition for Reproductive Choice.

My remarks will be brief, because everyone in this room understands what is going on here. Senate Bill 23 is yet another attempt to get the issue of *Roe v. Wade* before the Supreme Court of the United States, which anti-choice proponents hope will overturn *Roe*. The governor is going to sign this bill if it passes, and an injunction will be issued. Like similar bills in other states which have had immediate injunctions placed on them, the same will happen here because abortion is a legal, medical option for women into the second trimester.

I and many other interfaith colleagues are outraged that once again women's bodies and well-being are being used to advance a narrow religious perspective on a very complicated reproductive health issue.

While some believe that abortion from the moment of conception is a sin, many others of us in the faith community do not hold the same belief. The well-being of the pregnant woman and consideration of her family, her health, her future and her moral convictions are as important in the equation as is the future of a fertilized egg.

I have counseled women trying to make a decision as to whether or not to proceed with a pregnancy and have supported the decision she makes, because she has the moral and religious right to make that decision. It is not for me to tell her what to do.

I know of Catholic and conservative evangelical women who have chosen to terminate a pregnancy and who knew they had to keep it a secret because this choice ran counter to the teachings of their faith. I know of those raised in more liberal religious environments who have chosen to bring the pregnancy to term, because they personally should not deal with having an abortion. It is always her choice — not that of the legislature or priest or minister.

This bill does an immense disservice to women especially because it would outlaw a medically safe and legal procedure even before many women even know they are pregnant. I know you know that's the purpose of this bill. But think for a moment — who gives you the right to make that determination?

Thank you.