

REV. TERRY WILLIAMS TESTIMONY FOR MARCH 26, 2019
HOUSE HEALTH COMMITTEE HEARING ON SENATE BILL 23

Chairman Merrin and other distinguished members of the House Health Committee,

My name is The Reverend Terry Williams. I am an Ordained minister of the United Church of Christ and I currently serve as Lead Pastor of Orchard Hill United Church of Christ in Chillicothe. I have served as Pastor in Chillicothe for over six years and I am a lifelong Buckeye and a proud Appalachian.

I live and work in a part of our state that has for many years struggled to access affordable, effective healthcare. Finding a hospital, an emergency department, an urgent care clinic, or a trusted, local physician can often be difficult. Options are few when compared with those available in cities such as Columbus or Cleveland—and we have had to simply make-do with the options we have, even while our health outcomes suffer.

So it is with deepest regret that I see your committee today poised to further limit access to healthcare options for Appalachian Women. The legislation before you today—Senate Bill 23—would be unquestionably disastrous for Women in my community, intruding into their personal healthcare freedoms in ineffective and unconstitutional ways.

Already in my community, abortion healthcare access is so effectively prohibited that many Women are unable to access any abortion healthcare services at all. It costs a tremendous amount of time and money to travel the long distance to qualifying healthcare clinics that provide abortion services—time and money that many Appalachian women simply do not have.

As a result of this lack of access, Women in my community are already turning to other methods to provide the outcomes they desire for their reproductive choices. I am often called upon to provide pastoral care to Women who attempt self-abortion in my community. I sit in prayer with grieving Women whose wombs have been rendered unsuitable for future pregnancies because they lacked access to professional abortion healthcare.

Rabbis, Imams, Clerics, and Pastors—Pastors like me—are the people who journey through grief alongside these wounded Women, helping them find the strength within themselves to keep on living after trauma so deeply painful has become a part of their lives. We experience firsthand the horrific aftermath of poorly thought-out policies that attempt to prohibit abortion but which have only succeeded in forcing Women to employ unsafe means to secure abortions that leave them scarred physically, emotionally, and spiritually.

As a Christian Pastor, I am convinced that deep inside every person rests the root of true belief. Regardless of whether we confess what we truly believe with our words and our actions, our deep-down sense of what is real and right and true is what it is. At a deep level—deep down in the root of our bones—we as human beings have a sense of what is true and what is not—and I believe as members of

this committee you know deep down in your bones that this legislation will never have the effect its proponents desire.

Senate Bill 23 is an unconstitutional piece of legislation; You know in your bones that this measure will cost Ohioans thousands of dollars to defend in court—money that could be better spent doing good work for the people of the Buckeye state in any number of other areas and projects.

Senate Bill 23 criminalizes the actions of doctors providing abortion services; You know down in your bones that this measure forces physicians into a moral quandary between facing criminal charges and upholding the honorable oath of their profession to provide the best care possible to their patients.

Senate Bill 23 will not stop or even slow abortions in the state of Ohio; You know deep down in your bones that this measure will only make abortions more dangerous, forcing even more Women to turn to do-it-yourself methods that harm the family and destroy opportunities for new life in the future.

Deep down in your bones, you know it to be so: Senate Bill 23 is irresponsible, flawed, unconstitutional legislation, and Ohioans deserve better. I implore you today, stand up for the Women of my region and the people of our entire state and demand real legislation that actually improves health outcomes, strengthens physician-patient relationships, and builds a healthier, more vibrant Ohio.

Thank you for the opportunity to speak with you today; I would be happy to answer any questions the committee members may have.

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