

**Monette Richards**  
**Senate Bill 23 – Six-Week Abortion Ban**  
**Opponent Testimony**  
**Ohio House Health Committee**  
**March 26, 2019**

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

It is my feminism and strong belief in body autonomy that has driven me to be a longtime volunteer for NARAL - ProChoice Ohio, and Planned Parenthood Advocates of Ohio, two groups of incredible, and seemingly tireless folks. It is my Secular Humanism, and strong respect for the First Amendment that have driven me to volunteer to lead two other organizations, Secular Woman (a national organization whose mission is to amplify the voices of Secular Women) and the Northeast Ohio chapter of the Center For Inquiry, whose mission is to foster a secular society based on science, reason, freedom of inquiry, and humanist values.

And it is Ohio's SB 23 and similar abortion bans, that engage all of those parts of me at once.

Many others have spoken, with more authority and expertise than I, about the harm this six-week abortion ban will bring. We all know banning abortion will not end abortions. We all know that giving birth carries more risk than terminating a pregnancy. We all know that people who are pregnant, and not legislators, should be able to make the decisions that concern their own bodies.

And we all know that religious freedom was so very important, that the founders included it as the very first amendment to the constitution. And we all know that legislating one's version of faith into law violates the very right enshrined in that amendment.

(And if you didn't know, now you do.)

But Ohio lawmakers supporting this ban are choosing to ignore all of this: they choose to ignore the harm a ban such as this will do, they choose to ignore the science, ignore the testimony of doctors, survivors, mothers, and fathers, all to legislate their religious creed.

Twice I chose to carry my pregnancies to term. Once I chose not to. None of those decisions are regrettable. They were made within my conscience and my philosophies, and not those of a General Assembly Member. They were made with the understanding that I am the only owner of my body and in charge of what went on inside it.

It is my Secular Humanism which informs me that Ohioans should not be forced to live by anyone else's faith; Ohioans should have the final say over their reproductive choices; Ohioans should have complete autonomy over their bodies.

Ohio Senate Bill 23 is an imposition of faith, bad science, and restriction of reproductive freedom and should not be made into law.

Thank you for considering my testimony in opposition to his bill. I urge you to vote no on Senate Bill 23.