

Laura Rushton
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,

Thank you for allowing me to testify on behalf of reproductive rights for women in Ohio. I would like to express my strong opposition to Senate Bill 23, otherwise known as the six-week abortion ban. Over the past several legislative sessions, many restrictions have been placed on women who seek to exercise their Constitutional right to end a pregnancy, for reasons which vary from the stage of life they are in, to their economic circumstances, to the baby's chances of being born with a lifelong debilitating genetic disorder. These are very personal and private decisions, and most women take them quite seriously. Nonetheless, our state legislature has put many burdens already on women and their doctors, limiting their access to abortion and also services that would help them prevent an unwanted pregnancy in the first place. Clinics have been closed because of restrictions placed on them through the device of an omnibus budget bill. Funds have been taken away from Planned Parenthood, an organization which provides other prenatal care and screening services, as a punitive measure for allowing abortion to be a small part of the services they provide. All of this has been done in the name of protecting the rights of the unborn. But as our elected representatives consider the most restrictive bill yet, which would deny women the right to seek an abortion after 6 weeks, when they would most likely not even know they were pregnant, I wonder if those who support this bill, or are on the fence about it, have thought at all about the rights of that child during the pregnancy or after he or she is born.

For example, will the child be born to a drug user, and suffer from the effects of being born with drugs in its system? Given our state's high rate of opioid abuse, this is increasingly likely. What happens to that child without prenatal care? Will he or she be born prematurely to a parent who is incapable of taking proper care of the baby? I have seen children in foster care who have such severe disabilities, who cannot regulate their emotions and have violent reactions to frustrations that are multiplied by the conditions they grow up in. They had the right to be born, but they inherited a host of problems for which no one really takes responsibility. Their parents might be in prison, or simply unable to care for them, and they end up in foster care or neglected and possibly abused by relatives. It is heartbreaking to see these situations, knowing that those who consider themselves passionately "pro-life" do not really care about what kind of a life they have saved them for.

This may seem like an extreme example, but it is all too common in our state. I know as members of the Health Committee that children's health must be important to you, or it should be. Planned Parenthood has provided many reproductive health services to women of all ages and income levels, (e.g., contraception, STD screening and sex education), which are preventive so that abortion will not even be necessary. I urge you to put your legislative emphasis on supporting those services, rather than imposing a ban on all abortions after six weeks. I am not "anti-life" or "pro-abortion." As someone who taught elementary school and volunteers with low-income children, I know how important it is for a child to be wanted, loved

and well-cared for. Too many children are born with no guarantee of that. We must have humane laws that recognize circumstances in which an abortion, though far from desirable, is necessary. This Heartbeat Bill would ban abortion without recourse, and it will hurt the very children it is supposed to be saving by giving desperate women no choice but to have babies they cannot take care of.

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

Respectfully submitted by Laura Rushton