

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

Thank you for allowing me to testify today. My name is Sarah Cashman. I am a 54 year old, married, mother of two children in a family who moved here from the UK in 2007 and became citizens in 2015. I am strongly opposed to House Bill No. 68.

In response to Rep Hood's testimony, I would like to say the following:

Life isn't just about a heartbeat; it's also about brain function, sentience, the ability to develop and grow independently of its host, which in this case, is a sentient female, presumably of age for sexual activity, presumably someone who has had resources spent on her to feed, house, clothe and educate her up until this point. This bill proclaims that a fetus, too young to survive outside the womb, and an adult woman are not only unequal, but the fetus takes precedence over the woman. What about the woman's life, liberty and pursuit of happiness? Does a woman's life cease to matter as soon as a pregnancy can be detected?

Your reference to the 14th Amendment implies that you are now classifying a fetus as a person with all the rights and privileges of a newborn despite the fact that it hasn't been born, may not reach term, its existence hasn't been registered anywhere and it cannot yet survive outside the womb. Are we going to register babies at the beginning of the pregnancy now? Are first birthdays going to be celebrated at 3 months after birth? A living human being does have rights, including women who are pregnant. They are not the property of husbands, fathers, boyfriends, brothers; not any more. Their one role in life is not just as a walking womb. A baby is not viable until about 24 weeks; it is totally dependent on the grace and will of its mother, and she must have the choice whether to continue the pregnancy or not.

In a society as technologically advanced and as rich as ours, your argument that banning abortion would save human lives is confusing, bearing in mind your party is quick to cut funding for healthcare, education, food stamps and housing for poor families with children. No Kid Hungry, a charity I donate to every month, states that every year in America there are 40 million people including 13 million children living in "food insecure" homes. <https://www.nokidhungry.org/who-we-are/hunger-facts>

We should be working to improve the quality of the lives already being lived, rather than adding to the problem. Your bill is more punitive to poor families, and poor women who cannot afford a(nother) baby. Why are you not more concerned with the education, health and job training for women before they choose to become mothers to ensure they have the economic means to support a family? By forcing them into motherhood, you are reducing their current and future household income, therefore making them more, not less, reliant on the state welfare you are so keen to cut.

In response to Rep. Keller's testimony, I would like to say the following:

Roe v Wade (1973) IX A 'The Constitution does not define "person" in so many words... in defining "citizens," speaks of "persons *born* or naturalized in the United States.'" To say this legislation is responsible for over 65 million deaths is overly dramatic; can they die if they haven't been born? You also neglect to mention the quality of the mother's life having improved simply by not being forced into motherhood.

In further reference to your point on the 'saving' of lives, I draw your attention to the figures on poverty in Ohio, <https://www.development.ohio.gov/files/research/p7005.pdf> and ask why are you not concerning your efforts on eradicating poverty of the existing Ohio families before forcing them into further poverty with forced pregnancies? This report clearly shows that lower levels of education, lead to lower earned income, which leads to poverty. It is not logical to insist on protecting unborn life without offering the resources needed to maintain quality of that life into adulthood. Have you even considered how the poverty rates will rise if this bill goes into effect? Do you care?

The rules regarding "late term" abortion in states like New York are, that it is only allowed where there is **no viability for the baby at birth**, so to call it 'virtual infanticide' is misleading and unnecessarily inflammatory. <https://www.cnn.com/2019/02/06/health/late-term-abortion-explainer/index.html>

Again, it is not the 'smallness' of the baby, it is it's viability at birth. The mother is obviously viable having survived this long, but the fetus may not be. Even though healthcare, the high costs of which can restrict access, doesn't guarantee that both baby and mother will survive; I am surprised your Bill does not include as a minimum guarantee, free antenatal, postnatal and obstetric care throughout the state, to prove your concern to protect the life of at least the mother. In any case, a fully developed woman should have more rights than an undeveloped fetus that may or may not survive.

The level of development is an important factor. So is, being born/being viable at birth, after which society should do everything in its power to protect and nurture that life until death. It's absurd to compare the life of an unborn, undeveloped fetus to any viable living human being; they are not the same. There is an analogy doing the rounds: From a burning building, two mothers want to throw the fruits of their womb for you, a stranger, to catch and save. You can only catch one. Do you try and catch the newborn or the fetus? The logical answer is the newborn since that has far higher chance of survival. Do we not also have a duty to protect an older girl, in fact any girl past puberty? One that is pregnant from a rape, whom your bill intends to force to have the baby, effectively raping her again by taking away her power over her body?

Your oversimplification of your environment argument can be dismissed by science. Modern medicine can help a premature baby survive (if you can afford it in the US and still have a house to bring it home to) depending on how premature it is and the resulting underdevelopment; 24 weeks is around the time likely to lead to a viable outcome, so no, a trip down the birth canal is not the transformation into humanity, it is merely society's way of establishing person-ship for legal reasons. And it makes much more sense than doing it after a few weeks of pregnancy.

I'd argue that it isn't 'degree of dependency' but the parasitic relationship between mother and fetus. As I've taken pains to point out, the fetus cannot survive before around 24 weeks, but the mother can be healthy not being pregnant. As it's her body, her dreams, her future, her ability to earn income that will be affected, and perhaps her life if there are complications, shouldn't she be the one to make the decision, or does she cease to have a voice once her womb is busy?

I notice you bring up concerns about the mental health of the mother after an abortion, but your bill totally neglects any mention of her mental health when being forced to continue a pregnancy against her will. Or of rape and incest victims further traumatized by continuing a pregnancy. The health and welfare, both mental and physical, of the mother should be paramount to society, because that is the best way to raise healthy, happy children.

Your comments about the dangers of abortion are totally correct relating to botched back street abortions, which will rise if this bill passes, but not to medical abortions carried out by qualified staff which is a safe procedure; your scaremongering is misleading.

You are also correct that some women may suffer some regret after an abortion, but nearly all the afflictions you list can be suffered by women who, have had children, even children they have planned for, or women who have never been pregnant, so to suggest they are only the result of abortions is inaccurate. Postnatal depression is debilitating, but not all women suffer from it. I'm just mystified that you think forcing a women to continue a pregnancy against her will won't lead to depression, substance abuse, thoughts of suicide, sleeplessness, eating disorders, emotional numbness, anxiety, panic attacks, as well. Better access to good birth control has been proven to reduce unwanted pregnancies. Increasing funding to Planned Parenthood, another entity I donate to, would be a far more practical and logical approach to reducing abortion than this Bill.

The last part of your testimony has some typos, but I'll finish with this:

If you truly cared about women and their well-being, you'd listen to them.

You'd let them keep their voice, even if there's a fertilized ovum nestling into their uterine wall. You'd appreciate that they don't cease to have rights because they can get pregnant.

You'd encourage them finish their education/job training or wait for that dream job/promotion before they start, or add, to their family.

You'd let them plan rather than be held hostage by biology.

You'd let them decide when they are ready to take responsibility for another life, rather than punishing them for being human.

You'd let them enjoy the same level of sexual responsibility/freedom as men, by providing access to abortion as early as possible.

You'd make availability of safe and effective contraception a priority.

You'd recommend more funding for places like Planned Parenthood to ensure universal access to sexual healthcare.

You'd allocate resources before, during and after pregnancy to women in this state, not just pay lip service to caring about our health.

You'd appreciate that women want to engage in sexual activity but don't want to be pregnant; maybe not yet, maybe not ever.

It's about choice.

It's about being pro life, and everything it entails, not just pro-birth.