

SB 23 Opposition Testimony  
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Chair Merrin, Vice Chair Manning, Ranking Member Boyd

Over the past few weeks, I have attended or watched every hearing on SB 23. And the proponent testimonies have been compelling - babies born despite long odds or difficult, even violent, beginnings, the women who regretted ending their pregnancies, and the ultrasound photos that look like babies because they ARE unborn babies. We are all humans here. We were all pregnancies carried to life. Anti-abortion is an easy case to make. Especially for someone who has never experienced food insecurity, domestic abuse, persistent joblessness, the stress of racism, an addiction, a high-risk pregnancy, or even an unwanted pregnancy.

It was a case that I, too, once made before I did the research and before I realized that life is complicated.

What I've found striking from the proponent testimony is the lack of focus on the actual likely impacts of this bill.

Research suggests that the number of abortions in areas where abortion is legal is similar to those in areas where abortion is illegal. Abortion has been declining in developed countries, but that remains true in countries and states that have no new abortion restrictions. This chart from Vox and data from the Guttmacher Institute makes the case that there is no clear pattern in abortion rates related to abortion restrictions.

## No Obvious Impact

There is no clear pattern linking states with major new abortion restrictions in effect and changes in their abortion rate between 2011 and 2014

### Larger-than-average decline in rate



### Decline in rate



### Increase in rate



Source: Guttmacher Institute.

While the effectiveness of forcing women to carry more babies to term is likely to be low, this law will still very much have consequences. There will, of course, be some women, often the youngest, the poorest, and disproportionately women of color who will be forced to carry a baby to term. Women with the means to travel or purchase medication to end pregnancies will still do so.

I know many of you think that even one life is worth saving. But ask yourselves, "At what cost?" As with the philosophical trolley problem, are you pulling the lever on this train to save one life but irreparably harming one or more others?

Women who seek an abortion but are unable to attain one are three times as likely to fall into poverty as women who were able to get an abortion. They are more likely to wind up unemployed. They are less likely to achieve educational and other aspirational goals. Children born later to women who were able to get an abortion are more likely to live in households where there is enough money to pay for basic

living expenses such as food, housing, and transportation than children born because abortion was denied.

The consequences of this legislation means you are pulling the lever to force more women to carry wanted, but non-viable pregnancies to term. You will tie the hands of doctors who care for women who carry a baby with anencephaly, a baby who has stopped growing, or a baby with another fetal anomaly and has a heartbeat but little to no chance of surviving outside of a womb. And while an abortion, especially in the first trimester, has fewer complications than removing wisdom teeth, our maternal death rate is among the worst in the nation which is THE worst in all developed countries. More women will suffer hemorrhaging, eclampsia, and death.

I would love to live in a world where women are equal to men. Where women are not 81% of the single parents. Where we are not disproportionately responsible for the childcare and household work. Where we make just as much as men. Where healthcare is affordable to everyone and children from all backgrounds are just as likely to receive a quality education. I would even love to share the beauty and burden of pregnancy with men. But we don't live in that world. Even if we don't like it, women's equality is still firmly tied to our reproduction.

We ask our lawmakers to solve problems. And the research is clear that reducing unwanted pregnancies is the best way to reduce abortions. If you had spent the last 10 years trying as hard at improving access to free and long-lasting contraceptives as you have at trying to force women to carry pregnancies to term, you would have seen an even greater drop in abortions.

I'm not in opposition of SB 23 because I'm anti-life. I'm in opposition of SB 23 because I am pro-life. I am pro-women and children and people in poverty and people of color and all people who continuously have to fight for equal rights in our society. This bill will hurt an already marginalized group of people. I beg you to consider the lives of us all.

Please do not support SB 23.