

**Laura Sirot**  
**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 receiving my testimony today. My name is Laura Sirot. I am a 48 year old mother of two sons living in Wayne County, Ohio. I am strongly opposed to Senate Bill 23 which would make access to abortion inaccessible for most women and couples in Ohio.

By blocking access to abortion, this bill eliminates a woman and couple's ability to make the best choices for their family and is going to create great hardship not only for them but for communities throughout Ohio. In particular, since there is no "Local Impact Statement" that was required for the Senate passing of this bill, it appears that there has been no consideration of how this bill will impact maternal health care costs and the foster care system. In other words, this bill protects the "unborn" without any consideration for the impacts on them after they are born.

Ohio has one of the highest rates of death during childbirth in the entire country. It also has a huge and increasing population of children in foster care. As reported in the Columbus Dispatch in December 2018, the number of children in foster care in Ohio has drastically increased in the past few years and was at 16,154 at the time the article was published. If you ban abortion in Ohio, it is likely you will see an even greater increase in children in foster care.

What are legislators doing to help children in foster care?  
Are you yourselves foster parents?  
Are you increasing funding to Children and Family Services?

I urge you to fix what is broken in Ohio with caring for our existing mothers, families, and children and consider the impacts of passing this bill on Ohio's already suffering services when making your decision about voting on this bill.

My husband and I are foster parents. We have helped to foster three children in Wayne County. We have now adopted a child from foster care. Yet, we drive by a sign each day in our town that says "Foster Families Needed". Our county is desperate for families who are willing to foster children who are not able to be with their biological parents for safety or health reasons. The social workers at the Children and Family Services agency in Wayne County are tremendously overworked. I am sure this is the pattern across many counties in Ohio right now. Go visit your local Children and Family Services and talk with some of them too.

Beyond the impact that passing this bill will have on the already overtaxed maternal care and foster care systems in Ohio, the bill would also limit an essential, albeit last, tool for families and women in Ohio. Sometimes, as I am sure you know, we all make mistakes or have opportunities arise when it is not the right time for us to take that opportunity. By effectively banning abortion, this bill is locking women, couples, and families into those mistakes or mistimed opportunities. In the case of myself and my husband, we conceived accidentally during what was the most

stressful year of our adult lives. My body was under a tremendous amount of stress and we mistakenly thought we were having unprotected sex at a time I could not get pregnant. We were wrong. Given the amount of stress we were under, my pregnancy would have been awful for myself, my husband, my already born son, and for the developing fetus. We chose to end the pregnancy and had the resources to do that. In the same year, the mother of my adopted son also got pregnant after a one-night stand. She was in no shape to be able to care for a son. She had an addiction to opioid drugs. She overdose in front of our son when he was 3.5 years old. He will never forget that trauma. If we had continued our pregnancy, we would not have been in a position to foster children and provide a home for one. If she had not continued her pregnancy, perhaps one child could have been spared the horrible trauma that he experienced.

I urge you to keep abortion accessible in Ohio following federal guidelines.

I ask you to consider my testimony and vote no on this bill. Thank you again for the opportunity to testify.

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "Sarah H.", is positioned in the lower-left area of the page.