

Molly Sotherden
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 today. My name is Molly Sotherden. I am a self-employed glass artist and entrepreneur. I am strongly opposed to SB 23, known as the “Heartbeat Bill”.

I was born with a vagina, which means that in the legal sense, I am often considered sub-human. My bodily autonomy is continually called into question, and *my* wishes regarding my own person have been repeatedly ignored by the medical community. When I was in my 20’s, and had what most people would view as a “normal” job, restoring stained glass for historic churches, I also was privileged enough to have health insurance. I asked my OB/GYN at the time to tie my tubes. I was informed that nobody ties the tubes of a 25 year old woman, because we often change our minds in our thirties, and I didn’t have any kids yet. I was also told that it was highly unlikely that I would conceive, given the peculiarities of my body.

I knew she was correct in her assumption that conception was unlikely in my case, as I had had the misfortune to date an incredibly abusive man in my late teens, and despite all the times my “no” fell on deaf ears, I never wound up pregnant.

I asked again to have my tubes tied in my early thirties, and again, I was told no for the same reasons. After that, the economic fallout from 9-11 hit, and I was laid off twice within a 2 year period. Churches had bigger issues to attend to than their failing stained glass windows. I lost my health insurance, and, after a year of part time jobs that were barely keeping the roof over my head, I decided during the Great Recession to open my own art business. After all, I reasoned, I wouldn’t be laying myself off. I was using birth control, although I would like to point out that the methods available most cheaply are often those with the highest rates of failure.

On September 9th, over 10 years ago, my birth control failed. I know the day I conceived. I was the breadwinner, with my fledgling business holding up our household. At the healthcare clinic, I learned that conception dates are calculated from the start date of the last known period. So I was (according to the government) nearly 4 weeks pregnant on the day I **actually** conceived. My periods are incredibly erratic, and by the time I realized I was pregnant and scheduled an abortion I was 6 weeks along... but the government considered me nearly 10 weeks pregnant.

I have absolutely no regrets about my decision to have an abortion. Instead, I am saddened by an institutional healthcare system that repeatedly refused to listen to my wishes regarding my own body; I am saddened by the fact that I had to come to Columbus today and defend my right to exist, as this bill frames my existence as *less* valuable than the mere idea of a child who literally cannot exist outside of me until another 18 or so weeks *would have* gone by.

I'd like to leave you with one last thought regarding this bill. Most states define a school year as 180 days of instruction, and that number is taken from the National Center for Education Statistics¹. The link is listed at the bottom. Perfect attendance from kindergarten through twelfth grade, using 180 days per year multiplied by the 13 years *that* encompasses results in the number 2340. A woman who is on birth control pills by age 16 through age 36 - and that is, frankly, a very short window of fertility as detailed by reproductive organizations² (that link is also at the bottom) - takes over 5,000³ pills... and one missed pill can mean pregnancy. We are demanding that women have over 5,000 days of perfect attendance. I would invite anyone who had perfect attendance from kindergarten through the completion of their Master's degree to pick up the first stone.

I ask you to consider my testimony and vote NO on this bill that threatens to not only take away women's' bodily autonomy, but also ignores the language set forth in Roe v. Wade, which includes the word "viability". Thank you again for the opportunity to testify.

I will now take any questions you may have.

¹ https://nces.ed.gov/programs/statereform/tab5_14.asp

² <https://www.reproductivefacts.org/news-and-publications/patient-fact-sheets-and-booklets/documents/fact-sheets-and-info-booklets/age-and-fertility/>

³ 21 pills per month x 12 months x 20 years <https://www.mayoclinic.org/healthy-lifestyle/birth-control/in-depth/birth-control-pill/art-20045136v>