

Testimony of David Brewer

Senate Health, Human Services, and Medicaid Committee

S.B. 23

2 April 2019

Good morning, Chairman Merrin, Ranking Minority Member Boyd, and members of the Committee. My name is David Brewer. I've been a resident of Columbus for the past twenty years and I am here to testify against Senate Bill 23.

My marriage, my family, and my career have all been made possible by straightforward access to safe, legal abortion. In the early autumn of 1994, my then fiancée (now my wife) became pregnant, despite our diligent and responsible use of contraception (even the best methods are only 98 or 99% effective; we were the 1%). I was immediately thrown into a panic. I was chronologically twenty-five, but emotionally younger than that, and nowhere close to being ready to be a parent. Rebecca felt much the same way, only with the additional burden of the dread and shame that accompanies an unwanted pregnancy. Suddenly, all of our plans for our upcoming wedding, our hoped-for careers, indeed our entire life together seemed to be thrown into chaos. What had been a joyful time in our lives, with a great deal of excitement about the future had changed, in a moment, to fear, worry, and (I'm ashamed to say) resentment. Fortunately, we lived in California at the time and so our decision that we should not have a child before we were ready to start a family was a personal and medical decision, not something in which the state felt it necessary to meddle. Rebecca had the abortion in a familiar facility (the hospital run by her HMO, Kaiser Permanente), where she received thorough and compassionate care that was attentive to

both her present health and her future fertility. I helped her recover from the procedure, and we were able to go on with our wedding, our early married life, and our career preparations as we had hoped. Three years later, our daughter was born: a wanted and eagerly anticipated child.

If Rebecca had been unable to have that abortion (or even if it was just made humiliating and awful by state interference), our lives would have unfolded quite differently, and, I strongly suspect, not nearly as well.

Having those first few years together just as a couple gave us a foundation that has allowed us to weather the inevitable storms in any long-term relationship. This August will be our twenty-fourth wedding anniversary. I'm not certain we would have made it this far had it not been for that abortion.

Having our children when we wanted to have them (and were emotionally and financially ready to do so) has allowed us to become the parents we wished to be, and to help make our kids the splendid individuals that they are. My daughter is about to graduate from Oberlin and enter the work force. Our son is now a junior in high school and hopes to join the Army Corps of Engineers. In many ways, they are quite different from one another, but they both grew up feeling cherished by parents who were ready to have them, and that's given them an inner strength that will allow them to face whatever difficulties may await them in adulthood. I fear that if we had begun our family under duress, our children would not be nearly as confident, kind, and talented as they are, and the world would be the poorer for it.

Finally, finishing up my education at a non-hurried pace allowed me to produce work that was good enough for me to get hired by one of the finest research universities in the world, our own The Ohio State University. As a result, I've been able to teach and make a

difference in the lives of thousands of students over the past twenty years. Had I had to rush my education or divide my attention because of an unexpected child, I suspect I would not have been able to get nearly as good a job as I did and perhaps not even find employment in the field for which I have a calling.

So it's not an exaggeration to say that my entire life of the past twenty-five years has been made possible by the straightforward availability of a simple and constitutionally protected medical procedure in California in 1994. Yet, were S.B. 23 to pass, a person in the same exact circumstances in Ohio in 2019 would be unable to avail herself of all the opportunities that I have had, simply by virtue of where and when she lived, which seems profoundly unfair. That sort of arbitrary exercise of state power is both cruel and ultimately self-defeating, because it squanders so much of the talent and potential of the lives of its citizens. If you want Ohio to flourish (and I'm sure you all do), then trust women to make decisions about their own health and future well-being. Trust their partners and health care professionals to advise and support them. And focus your efforts on measures that will actually reduce unwanted pregnancies, such as readily accessible contraception and sex education that's actually based on science. For all these reasons, and many more, I ask you to reject S.B. 23. It's unconstitutional, cruel, fundamentally immoral, and all around bad for Ohio. Thank you. I would be happy to answer any questions you may have.