

## Testimony Opposing SB 23. Carolyn Harding,3/2/19

Thank you committee chairman Merrin and ohio house health committee members:

There is a predominant religious belief system in the current General Assembly, determined to legislate these same beliefs.

I was born in a devout Christian home. We went to church every week, prayed before meals and bed, paid tithe and provided for the poor and needy. In addition, our unique religious culture worshipped on the 7th day of the week, on Saturday, or Sabbath, from Friday night sundown to Saturday night sundown as was commanded in the 4th of the 10 commandments found in Exodus 20:2-17. We believed our bodies were the temple of god, from 1 Corinthians 6:19-20, so we followed a strict diet of vegetarian foods, were prohibited from eating unclean meat: pork and shellfish, no alcohol, no cigarettes, and no gambling, dancing, or jewelry.

We had our religious elementary schools, boarding high schools, colleges, and medical schools, so we could, as medical missionaries, go out to all the ends of the earth and spread the gospel.

I remember how important the concept of Separation of Church and State was to our religious community. You see we believed that according to the books of Daniel and Revelation that at the end of time our believers would be persecuted for keeping the 7th day Sabbath. Concerned and pro-active, our church leadership sent "lobbyists" to DC to assure that Separation of Church and State was foremost in the minds of Congress.

By my sophomore year at Christian college I had grave doubts that there was only one religious truth, one book of god, one way to god, or even god. I explored world religions and diverse metaphysical beliefs, including agnosticism and atheism.

I found most world religions have a male based power structure. Men primarily lead spiritual communities. Even Eastern religions and many indigenous cultures give men the power to over-ride, over-rule, and dominate women. Men decide what women can do in the home, what they can study, what they can choose as a career, how much they can make, whether or not they can own property, or even drive a car. And in our male dominated religious cultures there are dire, and often deadly, consequences when women disobey and assert personal freedom or independence.

US women fought hard to have the right to be a legal citizen and Vote. Susan B Anthony went to the polling station and voted, whereupon she was arrested, handcuffed and incarcerated for attempting to challenge the law. Millions of women have fought these patriarchal belief systems, religious cultures, suppression, repression and injustice. Women in the United States, and most first world nations, now have more equality - not parity - but more equality than many of our sisters do around the globe.

In countries with No separation of church and state, women are forced to obey their their religious leaders. They are forced to submit to their husband's will, whims, desires, abuse. If one of our sisters strays into temptation, she can be publicly stoned to death, all under the name of god and religious belief.

There is a great temptation for religious cultures and people to believe they have the One god-ordained truth, and this truth must be defended at all costs, even to the death for those who walk outside that religious belief.

Right now in Ohio, the prevalent religious culture in the General Assembly is evangelical or conservative christian.

## Testimony Opposing SB 23. Carolyn Harding,3/2/19

It strikes a chilling chord in me, a concern of blurring the lines of separation of church and state, when I observe our government sessions start off with a religious prayer, primarily a Christian prayer. Ohioans don't all share this religious belief system.

I'm wondering if this Senate Health Committee would be in agreement should my childhood religious culture create Ohio law with criminal consequences, should a citizen break the Sabbath - either by watching TV, attending a football game, or shopping at the mall between Friday night sundown to Saturday night sundown, or incarcerate citizens for eating pork, smoking cigarettes or having a glass of wine.

Do we legislate the Sabbath, a policy of "clean meat", or incarcerate cigarette smokers?

Funny? No, these are good people, trying to live the best life they know and believe in. However, their values, their culture, their religious beliefs, if made into law, would sever religious freedom for you and me.

I no longer believe in one religious truth.

I believe in a great creative energy.

I believe in the **law of conservation of energy** - that [energy](#) can neither be created nor destroyed - only converted from one form of energy to another.

I believe in the possibility of reincarnation, when a soul can no longer live in a body for any reason, that soul will find another vessel to continue on.

I believe in the Separation of church and state.

With respect, you and your colleagues are attempting to legislate a subgroup of Ohio citizens' religious beliefs into Law with criminal consequences in this abortion ban.

These religious beliefs are not mine, nor that of many other Ohioans.

The United States government stands for religious freedom, freedom from persecution by those who would criminalize women and their medical providers, through the lens of a religious belief culture.

I ask that You Stand for Separation of Church and State, and oppose SB 23.

Thank you.