

Testimony of **Kelly Yarmesch**

Proponent - SB 23 Heartbeat Bill

Ohio House Health Committee - April 2, 2019

Chairman Merrin, Vice Chair Manning, Ranking Member Boyd & members of the committee:

My name is Kelly Yarmesch. I am a lifelong resident of the Buckeye State, having lived in Cleveland, Cincinnati, Steubenville, and now Pickerington. My professional résumé features three years of full-time employment at a pro-life crisis pregnancy center. Now, I'm a 29-year-old mother of two little girls, and I'm 36 weeks into my third high-risk pregnancy.

Today, I implore the House Health Committee to do what is best for all Ohioans, and what is undeniably best for women in need of help and children who deserve to live: pass Senate Bill 23.

I've spent many hours with women who were contemplating abortion. Not a single one of them was considering abortion because she found that course of action appealing. Far from it. They felt like they had no other choice. Through my work at Pregnancy Center East in Cincinnati, I was able to be a voice of empowerment, helping women to see their own strength. To see them choose to give their babies life – to see them rise above the voices telling them, “You can't do this” – was inspiring.

Women contact crisis pregnancy centers because they're afraid. Fear of poverty, of lack of support from loved ones, of the ravages of addiction, of inadequate or unaffordable health care, of trauma, of the very real demands of motherhood interfering with educational and professional aspirations – all of these drive women to consider abortion. The trouble is, abortion solves nothing. All it does is take an innocent life of unimaginable potential and lay an extra burden on the shoulders of women who are duped by its empty promises.

Crisis pregnancy centers help women conquer the obstacles – and the fears. At Pregnancy Center East, we listened as our clients identified what made them feel as if abortion were their only option, and then we connected them with the resources and support they needed before and after giving birth. Rather than helping them terminate pregnancies, we helped them terminate their crises.

In recent years, Ohio's political leaders, including members of this committee, have worked diligently and effectively to limit the scourge of abortion. That fight is a noble one, and those who stand firm against the often extreme hostility of the abortion industry and its advocates deserve great credit. Now, with the introduction of Senate Bill 23, this committee and this chamber have the opportunity to take the next logical step toward protecting innocent children in Ohio.

Once Senate Bill 23 passes, as I pray it will, those women will hear more fear-mongering than ever. Among the complaints from pro-abortion forces will be the tired falsehood that pro-life people are really just pro-birth people who won't lift a finger to help women who become mothers under less-than-perfect conditions. I want this committee to know that the staff members, volunteers and donors who keep Ohio's crisis pregnancy centers' doors open to women in need, before and after their babies are born, prove that complaint false hundreds of times a day. I challenge the Ohio General Assembly to pass this bill. Our state's crisis pregnancy centers stand ready, as always, to help prove that laws that promote and defend life benefit all Ohioans.