

Testimony of **Laura Caporaletti**
Proponent of Senate Bill 23, the Heartbeat Bill
Ohio House Health Committee – 4/2/2019

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

Thank you so much for allowing me to testify this morning. My name is Laura Caporaletti and I live in Cincinnati, OH. I am currently the Executive Director of Pregnancy Center West, a pregnancy resource center located on the west side of Cincinnati.

I am passionate about SB 23 being passed because of many reasons, but I believe one recent experience of mine at the center will say it all. About seven weeks ago, a young girl who I will call Gemma walked into our pregnancy center. She is 21 years old, currently in her 4th year of college. She came in pregnant and terrified. Within minutes of sitting down in one of our counseling rooms she explained to me that she was not ready for this baby. At the root of it all, she was afraid. Afraid of what her parents would think, afraid of whether her boyfriend would stay with her, afraid of being kicked out of her Christian college, afraid of letting her softball coach down. I did my best to meet her in that fear and love her in that fear, letting her know that while abortion seemed like the only option right now – the only safe option – this was not true. We talked through her other options, but she didn't seem convinced. I was saddened by her determination to get an abortion, but did manage to schedule her for an ultrasound the next day.

It was at this ultrasound appointment that everything changed. Gemma was about nine weeks pregnant. I watched her as she looked at the monitor, trying to make sense of the baby she was seeing on the screen. But it was when they found the heartbeat and played it aloud for her to hear that her eyes welled up with tears. We finished the appointment, walked back to a counseling room, she looked at me and said confidently – “I'm not having an abortion. I'll keep the baby.”

Gemma heard and saw the heartbeat of her child and that made the difference for her in realizing the humanity of the child inside of her. She was able to recognize in that moment that she had LIFE within her. The maternal and human instinct within her to protect that life was then awakened. In a conversation I had with her just yesterday, she said it was like a switch was immediately flipped in her after hearing that sound. How incredible and how amazingly human and hopeful! However, I would be lying if I said this happens every time. Sometimes, a woman will recognize the life within her after hearing and seeing that heartbeat...but out of fear and desperation and because the STATE feels no responsibility for that life, because the STATE tells her it is still okay to end that life, she does. This is an absolute tragedy. It is a tragedy that we know a heartbeat can be detected as early as 5-6 weeks in the womb, that we know a heartbeat equals life, that we KNOW our nation was founded on the principle of protecting and defending innocent life...and as a nation we are still seeing 3,000 lives being taken in abortion every single day. I pray we all step up and decide to do better for our women, our men, and our children.