

REV. ELIZABETH GEDERT
HOUSE HEALTH COMMITTEE HEARING ON SENATE BILL 23
OPPONENT TESTIMONY | APRIL 2, 2019

Good morning Chairman Merrin, Vice Chair Manning, and Ranking Member Boyd, and other members of the Ohio House Health Committee. My name is Rev. Elizabeth Gedert. I am an ordained minister in the United Church of Christ, and I pastor a church in Delaware, Ohio, where I live with my husband, Sam. I am here today to encourage you to oppose Senate Bill 23.

I wish that nobody ever had an abortion ever. I wish that sex were safe for everyone all the time and that birth control worked the way it's supposed to 100% of the time. I am not in favor of abortion at any time during a pregnancy; I think there's a time to limit access. But six weeks in is not that time.

Last week, I received a hateful Facebook message from a man who doesn't know me at all. He had asked about my church's stance on abortion. I told him that our faith family shares a value for the sacredness of life and the need to care for the vulnerable. But we have different opinions on how those values are enacted in specific situations. This man's response was that I personally am not a follower of Jesus, and that Jesus is going to vomit my lukewarm congregation out of his mouth because killing babies is never right.

This bill feels like that guy's response to me. It's too narrow and too harsh.

It doesn't take into account the horrifying situations where pregnancy results from rape or incest. It doesn't allow for the time it takes to discover you're pregnant, decide what to do about it, and then come up with the resources to carry out your decision. It doesn't address the fact that 75% of women choose abortion based on economic concerns and fear of the future. It doesn't acknowledge how pregnancy can be detrimental to physical, mental, emotional, and financial health. Growing a baby is rough, long before you have the baby.

God's call to care for the vulnerable means that we should look first to the actual persons who are already breathing in this world. In domestic violence situations, men often withhold contraception as a way to control their partners. Forcing a birth isn't going to do anything about that.

We have more kids in need of safe and loving foster homes than people who are willing to care for them. Forcing births isn't going to do anything about that.

The legacy of redlining means that we have concentrated areas of poverty where kids go hungry, especially when school isn't in session. Forcing more births isn't going to do anything about that.

The unborn are already held in the hands of God, near to the heart of our Heavenly Father, cradled at the bosom of the one God who is the Mother of Us All. God protects them. We are called to protect and care for the already-born.

As lawmakers, you have a great opportunity to shape our state institutions in ways that reflect a consistent ethic of life, from conception to the grave. But I'm not naive. I know this bill will probably become law.

And so I ask you what are you going to do after that? What are you going to do with more kids in a system that is already broken and failing? What else are you going to do?

My husband and I have friends in state government. I know you are constantly forced to oversimplify situations which you know are incredibly complex. I pray regularly for you and for your families, that God would give you wisdom and strength as you work on behalf of all of us.

As I member of the clergy, I am also a public servant, albeit on a different payroll, and I know how hard it is to have your work publicly scrutinized. I sincerely appreciate the work that you do, and thank you for the opportunity to testify.

If you have any questions, I would be happy to try to answer them.