

**REV. LYNDA SMITH**  
HOUSE HEALTH COMMITTEE HEARING ON SENATE BILL 23  
OPPONENT TESTIMONY | APRIL 2, 2019

Everyone has a birth story that is sacred and human.

My mother had eight children who she loved dearly; however, she paid a price. As the oldest, I experienced my mother becoming more anxious and depressed with each new birth. After I married and had two children, I told mom that I was stopping with two because two was all I felt I could handle. I did not want my children to be affected by my anxiety and depression. My husband had a vasectomy at a Planned Parenthood clinic.

Mom told me she had asked her doctor for birth control after her 5th child, but the physician was Roman Catholic and refused. Mom was Methodist and had no religious teachings against birth control. But Mom had been raised to honor and obey men, so she accepted her fate.

Our Mom became weaker and more distraught. Our Dad worked long hours, including Saturdays, to make ends meet. I vowed to myself that my life would be different. I believed that my husband and my doctor (who I always made sure was a woman) were my partners, but there were to be certain decisions in which I would be the decider.

The *Roe v Wade* decision gave women and families the freedom to say “no more unexpected pregnancies.” The Supreme Court’s decision was based on the science at that time. Viability was put at about 24 weeks of gestation (5 ½ to 6 months). Science now has shown that a single body cell can be converted into an embryo and be induced to grow to its potential.

The Bible says that life begins with the baby’s first breath. My religious faith teaches that life is sacred and that the Supreme Court made the right decision in 1973. My faith teaches that it is a gift from God that a woman can have a safe and legal abortion if she believes that is best for her and her situation. So whose moral, spiritual, and scientific belief should prevail in Ohio?

The pro-life argument, that life begins at conception or when the fetal heartbeat can be detected, is an opinion not shared by many people of faith. Saying

something is a fact does not make it so, even if they say they are speaking for God or interpreting God's teachings.

In America, my religious belief is equally valid. How can it be that an opinion can be substituted for a parent's deeply personal and sacred decision? How can a woman be made to carry to term a pregnancy resulting from rape or incest? Being forced to give birth after rape or incest is adding another trauma to her suffering; it is just cruel.

It is shocking to me that this 6-week abortion ban (Senate Bill 23) be considered representative of a consensus of religious teachings. Taking such a life-changing decision away from the pregnant woman/girl, her loved ones, and her physician is not only heartless, but is a violation of humanity. A woman must be allowed to seek the guidance she trusts so that she can decide and what she can handle.

When a woman becomes pregnant accidentally or through rape or incest, she has the right to have an abortion before six months **or** to carry the fetus to birth. Any other requirement is a violation of her full humanity and a violation of my and millions of others' religious beliefs.