

REV. DR. ELAINE STRAWN
HOUSE HEALTH COMMITTEE HEARING ON SENATE BILL 23
OPPONENT TESTIMONY | APRIL 2, 2019

Chair Merrin and members of the House Health Committee, thank you for providing these hearings.

As a minister, as a lecturer in ethics, and as a former healthcare worker, I beg this committee to allow reason, compassion, and the common good of the citizens of Ohio to prevail. Senate Bill 23 must be defeated! This proposed question of law has been asked and answered in 2016. It is time to let it rest in its own failure.

Rather than being a simple matter of right and wrong, the issue of abortion is extremely complex and must involve the individual human beings involved in each case. To argue otherwise is dangerous and immoral.

The Hebrew and Christian holy writs do not mention abortion by name; even early church theologians such as St. Thomas Aquinas (13th century B.C.E.) held that ensoulment did NOT occur at conception. Current theologians on both sides seek to bend his teachings to meet their own opinions.

At the center of the conversation must be the woman whose body is at issue: her health, her support system, the conditions leading to pregnancy in the first place.

As a well-educated and ordained clergywoman, I have been a pastoral presence with women who have carried pregnancies full-term to the delight of friends and family surrounding them. On rare occasions, I have been at the bedside of women who have had to make very difficult decisions about pregnancy based on health and life circumstances.

As a former Planned Parenthood employee, I have counseled women who had no actual choice: her healthcare needs would create an unhealthy gestational environment; to ignore her medical needs would be even worse for both the woman and the fetus.

For a governmental body to inflict dicta on private citizens based on controversial and theologically one-sided views would be appalling. We must ask what effect it would have if the same religious dictum originated in a religion other than Christianity. How often we have heard cries to limit Muslim immigration and its

influence on our nation based on an assumed takeover by strict Sharia law. How is the current legislation any different?

Each represents one theological opinion (presuming to represent God's opinion). How dare we dare to speak for the Almighty!

Many medical and theological professionals have testified to the terrible damage this law would inflict on the poorest and most physically vulnerable of our citizens. To continue to move such legislation forward is to hide behind one — and only one — version of religious truth in order to inflict punitive and hateful structures on the women of this state.

Are we so afraid of women's ability to make decisions for themselves? What a terrible injustice that would be in this nation founded on Enlightenment values of reason and humanity.

Please don't allow SB 23 to move any further.