



**Testimony of Elaina Ramsey
Executive Director of Ohio RCRC**

House Health Committee

April 9, 2019

Senate Bill 23

Good afternoon, Chair Merrin, Vice Chair Manning, Ranking Member Boyd, and all committee members. My name is Elaina Ramsey, and I am here to testify as a “pro-faith, pro-family, pro-choice” Christian.

As the executive director of the Ohio Religious Coalition for Reproductive Choice, I stand with thousands of Ohioans in opposing Sub-Senate Bill 23. This bill does not reflect the values of the majority of Ohioans and Americans — including Protestants, Catholics, Jews, and other religious traditions — all of whom support access to safe and legal abortion care.

To illustrate this, my organization has mobilized 15 faith leaders to testify against SB 23 and collected signatures from our “[Ohio Clergy for Choice](#)” network against this bill and against all abortion bans.

Over the last few weeks, you’ve also heard testimony from Unitarian Universalist Justice Ohio, the National Council of Jewish Women, and from Catholics for Choice against this bill. All of these organizations and signatories combined represent hundreds of thousands of Ohioans who believe that SB 23 is morally wrong and infringes on both religious and reproductive freedom.

If that doesn’t tell you how out of touch this bill is with the people of Ohio, then I invite you to consider using a method for ethical and theological reflection called the Wesleyan Quadrilateral. I learned this while pursuing my Masters in Theology from a Methodist seminary, which taught me that one’s morality (or faith in public life) should be based on four components: scripture, reason, tradition, and experience.

As such, the Hebrew scriptures tell me that life begins at first breath and that the Torah contains passages where abortion is actually condoned (Numbers 5:11-31 and Exodus 21:22-25). The New Testament also tells me that Jesus never spoke about or condemned abortion.

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But the Bible is only one source of inspiration and not the moral arbiter of what is right or good in a pluralistic society, which is why the other three elements of the Quadrilateral are so important.

Therefore, reason tells me that a heartbeat (or a cardiac flutter, in the case of SB 23) is one indicator of life — but it's not the only one. A fetus is not a full human being at six weeks of pregnancy. A prelate may have the potential of life, but cannot survive outside the womb on its own which is why the viability standard set forth by *Roe v Wade* makes the most logical sense. (One simply cannot issue a death certificate without a birth certificate.)

Tradition tells me that abortion is a universal phenomenon, occurring throughout recorded history. From generation to generation, women have fought for their dignity, their bodily autonomy, and their sacred right to control their reproductive lives. No ban on abortion will stop people from exercising their moral authority. Abortion is health care — and abortion will always remain.

Finally, experience tells me that abortion is a family value. I have counseled women who terminated a pregnancy in order to give their other children a fighting chance. I have sat with those who desperately wanted children, but ended a pregnancy in order to spare their child-to-be from a fatal fetal anomaly and a pain-filled birth. And I have marched with those who have thriving families and have never terminated a pregnancy, but who affirm that abortion is a human right that should be accessible to all in a democratic society.

With these four components in mind — scripture, reason, tradition, and experience — I urge you to vote against S.B. 23.

Rather than waste taxpayer dollars fighting this unconstitutional bill, I ask you to advocate for policy solutions that actually support the well-being of pregnant people and families — policies and practices such as affordable health care, paid family and medical leave, and comprehensive sex education.

On behalf of Ohio's faithfully pro-choice citizens and communities, I ask you to do the right thing and to oppose this extreme and immoral bill.

Thank you for your time, and I welcome your questions.

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