

Testimony by Ellen M. Wittman

Senate Bill 145

June 20, 2017

Chairman Bacon, Vice Chair Dolan, Ranking Member Thomas, and members of the committee, Thank you for the opportunity to address this committee and share my thoughts on Senate Bill 145. My name is Ellen Wittman and I am a sophomore at Miami University. My interest in the pro-life movement began in high school when I participated in the Ohio Right to Life Oratory contest two years in a row, advancing to the national level both years. Since then, I have had the opportunity to speak alongside Dr. Ben Carson and Dinesh D'Souza, addressing thousands of Americans on pro-life issues. I am currently president of Students for Life on Miami University's Hamilton campus, where we work with students each semester encouraging and educating them on abortion issues. In this testimony, I speak on behalf of young pro-life women, statewide, who believe that SB 145 should become law, and I will explain why I believe it to be critical to the well-being, not only of our state, but of our nation.

I'll begin my testimony with a short story. It was a Tuesday night, my first semester at Miami. I was quietly studying in the library when I encountered a friend who explained to me that he was undecided about the abortion issue. He expressed this was because he "didn't know exactly what it was or how it worked." Through the confusion and shock that there was such ignorance on such an important issue, I saw an opportunity to enlighten my friend. I began to explain the gruesome abortion procedure and showed him a video released by *Live Action* which depicts a 2nd trimester dilation and evacuation (D&E) abortion. Not even two minutes

into it, my friend abruptly paused the video, exclaiming that he couldn't physically watch it anymore. He was horrified by this depiction of a *viable* unborn child being torn apart, limb by limb, and ripped from his mother's womb. Completely indifferent to the abortion issue five minutes ago, my friend then told me "I am definitely pro-life. That was horrible and that was wrong." All it took was a few minutes, and I had changed a heart. Today, I hope I can change a few more hearts. Today I hope that I can worthily represent the hundreds of thousands of young pro-life women across this nation. And today I hope that I can convince you to support SB 145 and ban the dismemberment abortion procedure that steals thousands of lives each year in Ohio.

The science is clear. According to research done by the American Association of Pro-Life Obstetricians and Gynecologists, the structures which transmit painful stimuli from the skin to the brain are present very early in fetal life, and *there is considerable evidence that the fetus may experience pain*. Further, their research found *increasing evidence that from the second trimester onwards, the fetus reacts to painful stimuli and that these may cause long-term effects*. They conclude that D&E abortion victims (i.e. second and third trimester) display all the same physical reactions to pain that any other human being would display. Just imagine, for a moment, that you are helplessly trapped in a room. Suddenly a stranger enters and uses sharp weapons to rip off your limbs one by one. You die a slow painful death. During a D&E abortion, an unborn child experiences the exact pain you just imagined. Arms and legs are dismembered piece by piece, a skull is crushed, and a heart stops beating. What was once a safe space for this child, has suddenly become a place of incredible danger and suffering.

There are few procedures which could be as painful as tearing apart a living fetus, limb by limb. It is a travesty that civilized societies continue to permit elective abortion by D&E, inflicting pain, suffering, and violence on unborn persons. We should also realize the health risks that are posed to a woman as a direct result of late term abortion. Ten percent of women suffer immediate complications from any abortion and many endure long-term reproductive damage such as sterility or ectopic pregnancies. Additionally, a 2010 study by the Journal of Pregnancy found that 67 percent of late-term abortion mothers met their criteria for PTSD. As a just and good society, we should all fight against the oppression of women and violence against the unborn. I view this as a nonpartisan issue.

I believe that my generation will have a huge impact on the pro-life movement. We are continuously increasing in numbers and in our pro-life support. Today, millennials outnumber Baby Boomers; and thus, we are clearly a powerful part of your constituencies. According to a 2015 Public Religion Research Institute survey, 52 percent of millennials said the label “pro-life” describes them somewhat or very well. A 2013 poll showed that 52 percent of people aged 18 to 29 favored bans on abortion after 20 weeks, compared with 48 percent overall. Even a poll commissioned by NARAL Pro-Choice America (2010) found that 51 percent of anti-abortion voters younger than 30 considered the issue “very important.”

For example, 27-year old activist Aimee Murphy, is the founder of the Pittsburgh-based nonprofit Life Matters Journal, which describes itself as a “human rights organization dedicated to bringing an end to aggressive violence.” Murphy was a pro-choice 16-year-old in California

when an abusive, on-off boyfriend raped her. When the rape resulted in a pregnancy scare, Murphy's rapist wanted her to get an abortion, and threatened to kill her and himself if she didn't. "In that moment, something clicked," she said. "I could not use violence to get what I wanted in life. I realized that if I were to get an abortion, I would just be passing oppression on to a child." Her organization and its flagship publication oppose abortion, and she recently stated: "I really have seen a massive shift with the youth, to ensure that our solutions are women-centered and that we're being consistent and nonpartisan, inclusive and opening and welcoming."

Today, we hear much about a "war on women", a derogatory reference to efforts to restrict abortion. But I propose that the real war on women is being waged against their very nature by the abortion culture. I am calling that abortion victims include the unborn children *and* their mothers. It is assumed that young women want abortion on demand and without apology. But I am writing as proof that that is not the case. My generation is the pro-life generation, and on behalf of all of us, I urge the passage of SB 145.