My name is Grace Smith. I am a personal care attendant to my sister with special needs and daughter to Save the 1 speakers, Brad and Jesi Smith. Save the 1 is a global pro-life organization of over 600 who work to represent and defend the exceptions. The lives that both sides of the abortion debate often deem to be unworthy. I am here today to remind you that every beating heart is valuable and worthy of the right to life without exception.

I was 9 years old when Faith was born. She was diagnosed shortly after birth with Trisomy 18 which is considered a fatal fetal anomaly. I remember walking into the hospital room right after my mom gave birth and thinking how cute and tiny she was. Considering my other 3 younger siblings were all in the range of 9 to almost 11 pounds, her little 5 pound self felt so small. I was holding her in a store one day while my mom shopped and a woman was walking past and did a double take. She had thought I was holding a baby doll. While my mom's mind probably went immediately on to how to get more calories into Faith, I was overjoyed and so proud. What little girl doesn't want a baby sister who looks as adorable as a baby doll? My 9 year old self at the time didn't know that just a few short weeks before, my parents were told by doctors that Faith's life would ruin me and my younger siblings lives. That her existence would crush ours.

Fast forward 10 years. 10 years that we were told were impossible. I won’t deny that there were hard days full of fear and uncertainty. But every single one of those days was worth it. Because of the weeks spent in hospitals at her bedside, I can comfortably walk into a hospital room to visit and encourage others. The oxygen and machines don’t scare me. Because of her diagnosis and the long list of issues that comes with it, I can understand medical lingo. The long names and fancy words don’t intimidate me. Because of growing up in what sometimes felt like medical school, I am now a certified caregiver in the State of Michigan. I have a job today because my parents chose life. Faith did not crush us. She built us. We are each more compassionate and kind people because of her.

Faith’s genetic abnormality gave her a lot of extra physical health issues that most people do not have to live with and because of that she is often looked at with pity. What people don’t know is that Faith is the most mentally healthy person I know. While some of us here have struggles with self-esteem, or anxiety, or depression, she exudes confidence and never questions her own worth. She never looks into a mirror and is disappointed with what she sees. She is grateful to have legs that walk, hands that pull my hair, and scars that show the battles she’s endured. People often question the quality of life a person with special needs has but I have learned that if anything it should be the other way around. Each of Faith's extra chromosomes may have given her some different obstacles in life but they also gave her extra joy, extra love, and extra faith.

I am testifying today as a caregiver, a sister, a young person, and a woman. A caregiver who knows the struggles but sees the reward. A sister who is so incredibly thankful for the life of each of my siblings. A young person who is missing one third of their generation because of the mass slaughter that is called abortion. And as a woman who understands that my choices should never include the murder of my innocent child.

You can beat Michigan in more than football, you can win in the value of life you hold for your citizens. If you want to see the people of Ohio become more compassionate and develop stronger communities, pass HB 23 without exceptions. The heartbeats of Ohio depend on it.