Witness Testimony: S.B. 23 / for 2-19-19

Chairman Burke, Vice-chair Huffman, Ranking Member Antonio, and members of the Health, Human Service and Medicaid Committee, my name is Amy Debro, and today I come before you in support of Senate Bill No. 23 that has been presented to the great state of Ohio, by Senator Kristina Roegner (27th Senate District), as well as all those who co-sponsored Senate Bill No. 23, otherwise known as the Heartbeat Bill. First, I would like to thank Senator Roegner for taking an insightful look at the issues that Ohioans deem as important, one of which is the lives of women and the lives of the unborn and addressing the legislature. As an Ohioan, who has been born here, married here, attended Ohio public schools, went colleges in Ohio, became a Registered Nurse in Ohio, I believe my words have credence, and I have a strong voice as to what the majority of the people want in Ohio.

I come to you as a woman, a mother of five children, an Ohio Board Certified Registered Nurse, and a person who believes in the sanctity of the life of the unborn. I believe that Senate Bill No. 23 quite clearly includes the statistical information that,

*“less than five percent of all natural pregnancies end in the spontaneous miscarriage after the detection of fetal cardiac activity … (and) over ninety percent of in vitro pregnancies survive the first trimester if* ***cardiac activity is detected*** *in the gestational sac”.*

*S.B. 23 also concludes, “Fetal heartbeat, therefore, has become* ***a key medical predictor*** *that an unborn human individual will reach live birth, (and) cardiac activity begins at a biologically identifiable moment in time, normally when the fetal heart is formed in the gestational sac.*

I would like to further that thought on *a biologically identifiable moment*, and share a personal event that touched my life a little over a month ago, specifically-January 3rd, 2019, that gave me even greater perspective to life and death. The event centers around “dad”, who is actually my father-in-law, Stanley Debro, and active 84 year-old who had been fighting cold-like symptoms, initially, toward the end of December, that seemed to later manifest as the flu. My sister-in-law and I would “check-in” on both mom and dad, especially since dad had been sick.

On January 2nd I arrived at mom and dad’s and upon entering his bedroom, where he sat in his beloved recliner, I immediately knew things had changes since I had last seen him just a few days before. Every red flag was raised. As a nurse, I knew dad had to go to the hospital for additional medical assistance.

I call his cardiologist, who stated he would like him directly admitted and bypass the ED at this time. When I went to assist dad up from the chair and get him ready, I realized how weak he had become. This was extremely concerning to me. Mom and I prepared dad to leave, which was quite a feat. It took slow, small strides for this little man of 125 pounds and a mere 5 foot-tall, with stops in between to get to my car, but at last we made it and were on our way to the hospital.

Upon getting there, dad was directly admitted; vital signs taken, put on telemetry, chest X-rays done in the room, phlebotomist took vials of blood, EKG completed, and alas I felt like dad was at the right place. The cardiologist came to examine dad and decided that the cardiac ICU would be more appropriate place, so that he would have closer attention while he was being diuresed; fluid taken off.

Upon being transferred to the Cardiac Intensive Care Unit the Intensivist asked Stanley if he wanted FULL CODE status, which gives permission for all resuscitative measures to be performed. He stated that he wanted this to occur if needed. Our family left dad at 10:30 pm (Jan. 2, 2019).

At approximately 1:30 AM, January 3rd, 2019, just 3 hours after leaving dad, I received a phone call by the physician stating that there had been a change in Stanley’s status and that they were resuscitating him right then. As a nurse I could visualize all that was going on since I could hear the CODE going on in the background during the phone call with the physician. She stated they were pushing vasoactive drugs, doing CPR and intubating him. I felt drained, in this surreal moment, trying to contemplate all that was happening. This was happening to MY loved one. I told the physician we would be on our way in just a few minutes, but we are 40 min away, and to continue “to work” on him. My husband, who also is named Stan, and quickly jumped in the car and headed to Cleveland. Twenty minutes before arrival, the doctor call my cell phone again and stated that they lost dad’s pulse. Even with all the extraordinary efforts, at the number one cardiac hospital in the world, they lost his heartbeat…

Dad was not to stay with us, no matter what interventions were being performed and applied. Dad ceased to have a pulse… a heartbeat. This was medically determined; death.

This is the end of a story…end of dad’s journey here on this earth, marked by a *biologically identifiable moment in time*. For Stanley Debro it was the cessation of a heartbeat, but for the unborn it is just the beginning. I appeal to this body to stand behind the “Heartbeat Bill”, S.B. 23, and protect unborn human individuals.

Amy C. Debro, BSN, RN

Written: 2/18/2019