SB 23 Opposition Testimony

Amanda Ford

Chairman Senator Dave Burke (R-Marysville) and Ranking Minority Member Senator Nickie Antonio (D-Lakewood).

I’m not intimately familiar with abortion.

I’m not because I haven’t had to be.

I was 26 and married with a good job, strong support system, and a loving husband when our first daughter was born.

I never experienced food insecurity, domestic abuse, joblessness, the stress of racism, an addiction, a high-risk pregnancy, or even an unwanted pregnancy.

I’m not old enough to have seen the hospital wings dedicated to women who took abortion into their own hands before Roe v Wade.

I rarely hear from the 1 in 4 women who have had an abortion because the topic has become so taboo.

I’m not intimately familiar with abortion and because of that, I once would have agreed with this ban.

I felt and still feel, I’m sure as many of you do, that a life of an unborn baby is precious. That this growing life with no choice in the matter is a magnificent biological miracle. And while I’m sure most of you have already made up your mind on this bill, I’m hopeful that those of you currently in favor of SB 23 have even a bit of an open mind and will consider the impact of this ban on all lives.

As I tried to understand reproductive rights myself, I discovered that the number of abortions in countries where abortion is legal is similar to those in countries where abortion is illegal. So making abortion illegal not only fails to deliver desired outcomes, but it also makes the procedure less safe for women. More women suffer. More women die. And our lives matter, too.

When I was pregnant with my second daughter, my best friend was just a few weeks behind me when she called me with devastating news. We cried together as she explained her baby had anencephaly and wouldn’t survive. In consultation with her doctors my friend opted for an early induced labor - an abortion in the eyes of the law. She considered the life of her unborn baby, her toddler, her husband, and her own life for a balance of the safest and most humane course for each life in her family. Their lives matter, too.

I explained my change of heart to someone dear to me who I had once preached to about the harm of abortion. It wasn’t until then that she confided that she had been pregnant as a teenager and decided not to keep the baby. She went on to have two children, when she was ready. Her kids have five more kids between them. Their lives matter, too.

Women have less economic, social, and political power than men. And whether we like it or not, our equality is still firmly intertwined with reproduction. Women who seek an abortion but are unable to attain one are three times as likely to fall into poverty as women who were able to get an abortion. They are more likely to wind up unemployed. With limited healthcare, childcare, and social safety nets, the cost of raising a child is steep. And women disproportionately bear this cost. And women of color disproportionately bear this cost. By taking away our reproductive rights, you will set us back a century in our fight for racial and gender equality. Women’s lives matter, too.

Women usually have more than one reason for having an abortion. They cite a complex combination of financial, timing, partner, health and other reasons. If we want to reduce abortions we can address many of these concerns. We could provide and protect access to affordable long-lasting contraceptives to prevent unwanted pregnancies. We could provide a living wage, more affordable housing, and protect and provide more affordable healthcare to break down the financial barriers to having children. We could place more accountability on men through educational programs and supporting research into effective male birth control. We could strengthen parental leave policies and childcare assistance to reduce burdens on parents. We could require following best practices to improve our infant and maternal mortality rate, which is among the worst in developed countries, to alleviate some health concerns. I’m not in opposition of SB 23 because I’m anti-life. I’m in opposition of SB 23 because I am pro-life. I am pro-women and children and people in poverty and people of color and all people who continuously have to fight for equal rights in our society. This bill will hurt an already marginalized group of people. I beg you to consider the lives of us all.

Please do not support SB 23.