March 6, 2019

To: Chairman Burke

 Vice Chairman Huffman

 Ranking Member Antonio

 Members of the Senate Health Human Services & Medicaid Committee

From: Lindsay Rerko, D.O.

941 Chatham Lane, Suite 206

Columbus, OH 43221

Re: Support of SB 23, Heartbeat Bill

Chairman Burke, Vice Chairman Huffman, Ranking Member Antonio and Members of the Senate Health, Human Services & Medicaid Committee, my name is Dr. Lindsay Rerko, and I am a primary care physician here in Columbus, Ohio. I have practiced full spectrum family medicine including obstetrics for 10 years and I am the mother of four children. I have been tasked to speak on a very salient issue, salient once again because current legislative action in other states is making it even more important for Ohio to take a stand. I realize many of you already hold a strong opinion on the subject of abortion, but I plead for fair hearing today as I advocate for those who have no voice.

Society could be defined as a civilization governed by laws. For example, laws differentiate between manslaughter and murder. Manslaughter is an unintentional death. Murder is premeditated – the punishment: possible life in prison or even death.

If an assailant kills a pregnant woman, he or she is charged with two deaths. The unborn child is, by law, considered another human being. So how is it that an inconvenient, unwanted, unborn child suddenly becomes just a “clump” of cells.

The dilemma of agreeing on when life begins is older than any of us in this chamber, seemingly incapable of a finite answer. While the deliberations continue, millions and millions of little ones have been and continue to be aborted. Abortion is premeditated and has become an antidote for the unwanted pregnancy.

Many decry any attempt to regulate abortion because of a woman’s “right to choose.” Does that right to make reproductive healthcare decisions for herself extend to the being developing inside her. Who makes healthcare decisions for that life? We as a civilization need laws to direct and guide those making this critical decision.

One thing we can all agree on is there are far too many abortions. When President Obama was running for office the democratic platform read that abortion should be rare. According to a February 17 Columbus Dispatch article, nearly one million abortions are performed annually in the U.S. That is the OSU stadium filled to capacity 10 times. The Charlotte Lozier Institute reports that the abortion rate in Ohio is above 20,000 per year. That is the population of Portsmouth, Ohio. These statistics most certainly negate that abortion is rare.

The reason for far too many abortions are far too many unwanted or unnecessary pregnancies. The right to choose should be exercised at the time of conception. Yet, according to the Ohio Lozier survey, 60% admitted giving no thought to contraception when they conceived. Even more disturbing, 41% were repeat abortions and 16% admitted having more than 2. Abortion should not be a means of birth control.

Even the emotional health of the woman can and is frequently used to justify abortion. Emotional health cannot be defined by law. There is no measurable unit to define one’s level of emotional distress. Do we use a scale of 1 to 10 and if you are a 5 or 6 you receive validation for an abortion. Look at where the pain scale got us? Pain became the fifth vital sign that had to be treated opening the gate to the current opioid crisis.

I want what is best for my patients. Abortion is not good healthcare. After reading post abortion testimonies of women in our state, it is clear that many do not experience relief or feel that it was the best decision at the time. Rather the following quotes typify the devastating psychological consequences:

 “I murdered my poor innocent baby.”

 “I hate myself.”

 “The day following the procedure, I attempted suicide.”

There was another common thread through these testimonies. The “right to choose” was eclipsed by the coercion of others. One boyfriend threatened to kill himself if his girlfriend refused to abort.

I implore you to take a stand. Some have already begun to slide down that slope, allowing abortion right up until the time of delivery. This is not progress. This is pathetic.

How many times have you heard,
 “If I can save just one life, it will be worth it.” In the last hour, two people were aborted. We will never know what these two Ohioians would have contributed to our state and nation.

You have the power to save many lives with your vote. How appropriate that OHIO, “THE HEART OF IT ALL” should advocate for the beating hearts of the innocent.