

To: Family & Community Advancement Committee

Re: House Bill 69

I am writing today on behalf of the Secular Coalition for Ohio to express our opposition to House Bill 69, the so-called "Heartbeat" bill.

HB 69 is nothing but false science and subjective religious beliefs wrapped into a proposed law that would further restrict the rights of women to make choices over their own medical care. We would hope the committee would put a stop to this miscarriage of legislation.

The consensus from the medical community and the facts show that a fetal heartbeat is a poor measure of the viability of a fetus.

Studies have shown having a heartbeat is neither a complete indication of viability of the fetus, nor does it speak to its ability to perceive its surroundings. Heart cells normally begin rhythmically contracting by around the fifth or sixth week, which means at this point the fetus is smaller than a grain of rice. In fact, such early sonograms usually detect the presence of the embryonic yolk sac, not the fetus itself.

Furthermore, we've known for a long time that a beating heart is not a good indication of life or "personhood," since hearts are normally quite able to continue beating completely independent of the body. Even more amazingly, when heart cells are spread on a piece of synthetic mesh, the entire mesh begins to synchronously beat, just as a heart does.

We strongly object to legislators inserting themselves between a woman and her Doctor. Reproductive decisions should only be made by women and their family, informed by the best medical information provided by their doctors.

The Secular Coalition for Ohio understands there are religious objections to abortion, but our history of government and court precedent prohibit enacting biblical law as Municipal law. Forcing one sect's beliefs using the force of the state just seems so un-American it shouldn't need any further explanation.

It's ironic that the legislature only has interest in children that reside in a woman's womb. The legislature still has not dealt with the growing issue of infant mortality, while continuing to weaken Ohio's education system with further attempts at "reform" and budget cuts.

The Secular Coalition for Ohio believes any law regulating medical decisions should be based on strong scientific evidence and not subjective religious beliefs.

House Bill 69 fails on the science and is nothing more than subjective religious beliefs. It should be rejected.

Douglas Berger

Co-chair Secular Coalition for Ohio