

H.B. 69 (Heartbeat Bill) Proponent Testimony
Ohio House Community & Family Advancement Committee
3/10/15
by Mary Rathke

Hello my name is Mary Rathke and I am honored to testify here today. While I am from Michigan I do not have strong ties with the Spartans or the Wolverines so your Buckeyes are not my enemy.... On the contrary since my ex-husband moved to Ohio we sometimes root for them in our home, my children, Matthew who is 16 and Faith who is 14, have spent many summers and my daughter has even attended school here in Ohio. With their family and time spent here in Ohio I feel it is very important for me to speak on behalf on them and the implications this bill may have on their lives.

Protection for all life, no matter the conception or perceived quality, is very important to my family. My birth mother suffers from schizophrenia yet as her child my life is not defined by her mental illness, even though many will argue that women who are mentally ill should be forced to have abortions because their children may not be normal. She was raped on her way home from work one evening, which resulted in her conceiving me. This also is used by many as an excuse to say that my life is not worthy of equal protection under the law. However, the Declaration of Independence says that "All men are created equal" so why are exceptions added to laws which discriminate against a group of people who are conceived in rape?

My life matters, my children's lives matters. The lives of all offspring in the womb deserve equal protection under the law at the moment their heart begins to beat. It is the duty of the government to protect the most vulnerable in our society. Especially from those who have the ability to harm them. When I was pregnant with my oldest son Matthew, I began having problems right away. In the second month of pregnancy at less than 8 weeks I began bleeding uncontrollable. My doctor sent me in for an ultrasound. My husband and I were relieved when we heard his heart beating and saw him active in the womb. I was told I would not carry him full term because the placenta was not fully attached to my uterine wall and I could end the pregnancy through abortion. I didn't understand why the doctor would want me to stop his beating heart. I refused the abortion. Matthew was born at 1 lb 8 oz at 27 weeks and is now a 16 year old honor roll student, who is drummer in the school band and swims the butterfly stroke on his swim team.

It should illegal for a doctor to end the life of a beating heart. Matthew's life is worthy of equal protection under the law. One excuse the doctors made when suggesting ending his life was the fact that he may have disabilities. I have a wonderful nephew who is disabled and that does not disqualify him from equal protection.

I am proud of the sponsors of this bill. All beating hearts need to be protected equally. Protecting the lives of the most vulnerable buckeyes is why you were elected to your positions. You have a great responsibility in passing bills that will defend those who need protecting. We are beyond the day of saying a developing child is tissue, I heard Matthew's beating heart before 8 weeks. If life ends when the heart stops beating, common sense tells us life began when the heart begins to beat. And whether you are conceived in rape, or incest, whether you will be mentally ill or disabled whether you will run for office or stay at home with your little ones we are all created equal and we all deserve equal protection under the law.

Thank you for equally defending all of us.

Mary Rathke, Conceived in Rape