

March 8, 2015

### **Testimony – HB 69**

Chairman Derrickson, Vice Chairman Ginter, and Members of the Ohio House Community and Family Advancement Committee

I joyfully teach a regular Bible Study. In that class are women of various races, ethnic backgrounds, educational background, and political preferences. Scripture often serves as a springboard into discussions of the everyday welfare of the people around us. Therefore, we talk about feeding the hungry – setting free the captives – loving enemies and neighbors – hospitality that is willing to sacrifice one’s own life for the stranger and outcast. We embrace biblical metaphor and press for the vision for life within such rich images. There is something special about the biblical image of breath that usually shakes up our conversations and brings us right down to everyday life and the choices and actions we are invited to make each day.

When I have brought up the many attempts by members of this House to control access to contraceptives for women or the ability for a woman to choose to have an abortion – they roll their eyes in disbelief and, quite honestly, disgust. Most often it is with a high-pitched “again?!” For them and others and for me, it appears that your attempts to monitor life and life choices are always about the need to have control over the well-being and personal choices of women. I would be amiss if I did not give voice to their opinions about men and birth control and contraceptives and the never-ending access to drugs like Viagra. For them, men are allowed to violate the ways of nature for recreational sex or a commercialized view of what makes a man – a man. Will this legislative body attempt to step in and test men for their sexual viability or potency? If so, who will be given the power to test – and when – what will be the measure of such an examination?

Who will have the power to call for the testing of a female and when will it begin? Will my granddaughter – when she reaches the age of puberty (an age that now can be as young as nine years) have to undergo an abdominal test for a heartbeat? Will this have to happen each time she goes to her doctor? Will it be restricted to appointments when she has abdominal pains or

will it become routine? What happens to health providers who view it as ethically wrong to impose such tests on their female patients? What a violation! What a gross imposition! What an impoverished view of the gift of sexuality?

I find that though there is much talk about scientific facts in regard to when life begins, the science of conservatives and liberals is wonderfully biased by their own views and how so-called facts give support to one side or the other. I tend to be a liberal-minded Lutheran pastor and yet when it comes to life, I am quite a conservative reader of Scripture. Life comes with breath. Viability comes with breath. Possibility and promise comes with breath.

I testify as a religious leader of a congregation in Columbus, Ohio. I do not expect you to take up my religious views. I find the pervasiveness of some religious opinions and beliefs - tied into attempts to write laws within states - to be abhorrent and quite out of place in these hallowed halls. Whenever I hear legislators pulling out their lexicon of Christian images in an attempt to groom our secular legislatures into Christian assemblies, I think of how often we Christians are offended when people of other faiths attempt to do the same thing. We do not run our country by religious laws that we may favor from our specific backgrounds. When we do, the look of oppression is usually on the horizon. **I testify against HB 69.** Thank you.

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