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**Proponent Testimony on House Bill 145**

**Senate Judiciary Committee**

**Tuesday, June 20, 2017**

Chairman Bacon, Vice Chair Dolan, Ranking Member Thomas, and distinguished members of the committee, thank you for allowing me to testify today on Senate Bill 145. My name is Melissa Stack and I am the President of Licking County Right to Life, an affiliate of Ohio Right to Life. I have been a RN for 23 years, specializing in women's health and newborn care. Today, I speak in support of Senate Bill 145, Ohio's Dismemberment Abortion Ban.

I realize feelings run deep when there is discussion regarding abortion. Abortion is an impassioned subject and I thank you for taking the time to hear my testimony today in support of the Dismemberment Abortion Ban.

Over 240 years ago, Thomas Jefferson and The Committee of Five drafted the Declaration of Independence. Many of us can recite by heart some of the treasured lines, such as:

*We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights, that among these are Life, Liberty and the pursuit of Happiness.*

According to the Declaration of Independence **life** is an unalienable right. Abortion has taken the inalienable right to life of over 58 million over the last 44 years. Some, if not many, of those lives endured the brutal reality of a dismemberment abortion

Advancements in science and technology have allowed us now to know that unborn babies can feel pain. There are numerous scientific research journals with evidence supporting the fact that unborn children feel pain. We now know with the improvements in ultrasound quality that these tiny babies try to “get away” from painful stimuli in utero. Stop and think about that... these babies try fruitlessly to escape the pain of a dismemberment abortion. Now that we know these facts, we have a duty to stop such barbaric practices.

Many of you may remember the case in 2007 of Michael Vick, the Atlanta Falcon’s player who plead guilty to federal charges related to dog fighting. NFL commissioner Roger Goodell called Vick’s involvement in dog fighting “cruel and reprehensible.” The country was enraged. How could anyone do such cruel things to a dog? Why is the country not enraged by precious pre-born babies being torn limb from limb?

As a registered nurse, I have had the privilege to work with many families, women and newborn babies. It puzzles me that if a baby is wanted by their family, we do everything possible to get the baby to full term. If the infant is born early, even very, very early we will do everything in our power to save this tiny baby. However, if the family does not want their baby, it is okay to kill this little person in the cruel and incredibly painful act of dismemberment while the child is alive. How does this make sense?

When a woman is pregnant with a “wanted” baby, she is congratulated. She makes plans for her baby, not calling the baby her fetus or products of conception. Names are considered and she and her family can’t wait to find out the gender of the baby to buy those first pink or blue little outfits.

If the baby is not wanted, he can be torn apart alive. I can’t wrap my head around this inhumane treatment. How can we be so hardened not to care if a tiny baby is killed in this manner? Shouldn’t the womb be the safest place on the earth, not a place of barbaric dismemberment?

From time to time, I had the opportunity to work in the neonatal intensive care unit (NICU). The registered nurses in the NICU are my heroes. I was in awe of their skills taking care of the tiniest little babies. Some of these babies were born at 23 or 24 weeks and survived. The nurses handled these little ones with such care. Touching them gently, protecting them from noise, cool temperatures, too much light and providing pain relief for painful procedures. This is the kind of care that those tender premature babies need, it is the kind of care expected by parents, and it is the kind of care that is delivered by medical providers.

If the child is wanted, the child receives human rights. If the child is not wanted, not only does the child not receive human rights, but the child can be killed in such a heinous fashion. How is this possible in our great country?

Dismemberment abortions are generally performed between 13 and 24 weeks gestation. Infants have survived being born prematurely at 21 weeks and 5 days. Incredible. How many babies are torn apart alive after viability?

I care deeply for women and what women go through. In high school, my best friend became pregnant. I saw first-hand, how hard it was for her to be pregnant at that age with little support. She was strong and she got through her pregnancy and lovingly placed her son for adoption. I was by her side throughout her journey and we remain friends today. My care and support for women is unwavering.

As a registered nurse, I am a huge proponent of education. I believe education empowers people to make the best possible decisions. This is especially true in health care. Educating people on the reality of how the abortion procedure is performed changes minds. Live Action has produced a video showing people being educated on the reality of abortion. Person after person changed their minds from pro-abortion to pro-life. When people are given full information and the truth about abortion, minds are changed and life wins.

I respectfully ask each of you to consider if you would want this violent and painful abortion procedure performed to end the life of your child, grandchild or loved one. I humbly ask that you support the Dismemberment Abortion Ban.

We must be bold and stand up for those without a voice.

Thank you for your time and your service to the great State of Ohio.