

Testimony of Margaret Light-Scotece, Board Member of Women
Have Options – Ohio, House , Health Committee
Senate Bill 23
March 26, 2019

Chairman Merrin, and members of the House Health Committee, thank you for the opportunity to testify in opposition to Senate Bill 23. My name is Margaret Light-Scotece and I am an Attorney and Board Member of Women Have Options – Ohio, Ohio's only statewide abortion fund. I am here to testify on behalf of the pregnant folks of Ohio and the many loved ones who have shared their abortion stories with me.

I stand before you to strongly urge you to reject Senate Bill 23 because it is an incredibly dangerous bill. I sympathize with the members of the committee who truly believe this and similar bills are necessary to protect the health and safety of Ohio citizens. I was in your position, ideologically speaking, not even ten years ago. In college I was a member of my college's right to life organization, and even attended the 2010 March for Life. I thought that I was loving the most unloved of humans, but I was wrong. While in college I found myself in a physically violently and emotionally abusive relationship. My partner interfered with my reliable access to birth control and regularly threatened to use any child of our relationship to further control me. I am incredibly thankful that I did not become pregnant during that relationship, if I had, I would have sought an abortion. I was not able to protect myself or my pets from my partner, and there is no way I would have been able to protect a pregnancy or a child. My partner favored cornering me so that he could kick my abdomen while he hit me with anything handy. I am doubtful any pregnancy would have even led to a healthy birth, and if I miscarried my deeply catholic partner may well have killed me for failing to carry his child. One in six pregnant people suffer domestic abuse during

their pregnancy¹ and for people living in abusive relationships pregnancy can worsen the severity of the abuse and even lead to femicide. If this bill had been law when I was still in college it may have cost me my life. I was so naïve when I thought being anti-abortion was about loving my fellow humans. S.B. 23 will disproportionately affect those in our state who are already marginalized, discriminated against, and at risk of abuse or violence. We already know that the majority of people who seek abortion healthcare wish they had been able to access that healthcare sooner. We know that abortion regulations such as this close clinics, increase costs, increase wait times, and risk patient lives. The right to bodily autonomy is a fundamental right that should not be infringed upon without exceedingly strong state interest. S.B. 23 would ban abortion after the detection of a fetal heartbeat, which can occur as early as 6 weeks after conception, before most people are even aware they are pregnant. Similar heartbeat bills passed in other states have been declared unconstitutional at the state and federal level. If S.B. 23 is passed and signed into law abortion healthcare would be largely inaccessible for the majority of Ohioans. Not only is this unacceptable on moral and ethical grounds it also blatantly violates prior Supreme Court rulings. Passing a law knowing it is unconstitutional is a violation of the oath you took when you were sworn into office. It is a violation of the promise you made to the people of Ohio and it reckless and risks the health and wellbeing of tens of thousands of Ohioans. Enacting an abortion ban knowing it is unconstitutional is a waste of the tax payer funds expended to draft, pass, and defend an unconstitutional, uncaring, medically inaccurate, and dangerous law.

One in four women has an abortion in her lifetime, everyone loves someone who has had an abortion. Access to abortion is a fundamental human right, and S.B. 23 would strip that right from the majority of Ohioans who face a pregnancy decision. As an abortion advocate, abortion funder, attorney, parent, and citizen of the state of Ohio I strongly urge this committee to vote against this bill.

¹ <https://www.marchofdimes.org/pregnancy/abuse-during-pregnancy.aspx>

I would be happy to answer any questions from the Chairperson and the committee.