

Catherine Johnson
Opponent Testimony
Senate Bill 23
Ohio Senate Health, Human Services and Medicaid Committee
Wednesday, February 26, 2019

Chairman Burke, Vice Chair Huffman, Ranking Member Antonio and members of the Senate Health, Committee,

Thank you for allowing me to testify in opposition to the Senate Bill 23, the dangerous six-week abortion ban. My name is Catherine Johnson or CJ, and I am a 40 year old woman born and raised right here in Ohio. My life has been a fantastic journey so far. I have been able to travel - my internship was in Hawaii, I've also journeyed to Alaska, I dove the Great Barrier Reef in Australia, I've been to Hong Kong, Mexico, and Canada. I've also lived in six different states, but Ohio will always be my home. My life has been my choice and I've chosen to travel and see the world as much as I can.

I currently own my own company with the BA I earned in 2001. I have this amazing and fulfilling life because I was able to make a choice when I was 19 years old and a freshman in college.

Back up to when I was 16 and met who I believed was the love of my life. He and I were together for 2 years off and on. When I was just about to graduate from high school, he took his own life. This left me completely devastated. I couldn't even think about going ahead with my life and going off to college - choosing a major and wondering what kind of life I could have... I couldn't do it. I felt so guilty that he was gone, and yet here I was. Why was it him? Why not me?

As I was not thinking of my future, or anything really, I was not interested in being careful, and I accepted intimacy from a man that impregnated me. He refused to use condoms, but I really didn't care at the time, and he was willing to advantage of the situation. I was not in the right state of mind, and it would be awhile until I was.

My pregnancy: I found out I was pregnant at about 8 weeks. I was extremely sick and not doing at all well. My living situation in the dorm was atrocious.

The repercussions: My father would have disowned me, so I would've had to drop out of school, get a job, and find a place to live. And how could I work and take care of a kid? Also, the man that impregnated me wouldn't talk to me again unless I had an abortion, so I would have been completely on my own, 19, and uneducated except a few months of college.

What an abortion ban does is take lives. I never would have been able to have the life I have now. It is inappropriate and unfair to shackle a person to a lifelong responsibility because they made a mistake. Because a man made a mistake by impregnating her. I want every woman to have the ability to make her own decision about what she wants her life to be.

Do you / does anyone think they have the right to dictate people's choices in life? Does anyone have the right to tell me I've lived my life wrong? I have lived my life to the fullest and have been successful. I earned my Bachelor's degree, I was able to find work and eventually start my own company. None of this would have been possible if I would've had to pay for my mistake/ a man's mistake during an extremely volatile period in my life.

Sincerely,
Catherine Johnson