

Testimony of Rachelle Heidlebaugh
Proponent of S.B. 23 – The Heartbeat Bill
Ohio Senate Health Committee – March 6, 2019

Chairman Burke, Vice Chairman Huffman, Ranking Member Antonio & members of the committee:

My name is Rachelle Heidlebaugh from Findlay, Ohio. I'm unable to be there in person as I have moved out of state due to my husband's work. I am still doing volunteer work with Ohio organizations and some of you have heard my story before.

I've been advocating for the Heartbeat Bill for over 8 years because of what I went through after my abortion.

My personal story starts one night 22 years ago, when I was drugged and raped. I woke up in a strange room, in shock, confused, in a fog, barely able to walk. I realized it was time for me to be at work, and as a divorced, single mother, I knew I could not afford to miss work and lose my job.

I had 30 minutes to get to work, so I did not go to the police or to a hospital for treatment. I went to work.

A few weeks later I found out I was pregnant. I wish I would have turned to God, I wish I would've gone to a crisis pregnancy center. But I didn't. Terrified of raising another child alone, I was easily convinced that I should have an abortion.

I thought I could keep "the secret"....but I couldn't begin to comprehend the lifelong impact of the choice I was about to make. I remember thinking, "It must be okay since the law allows it." Laws are supposed to protect us, right? The law did not protect my baby....or me.

I remember thinking how much I loved my beautiful 11-year-old daughter, Heather. I would, in fact, DIE for her, if necessary. And deep inside, I knew that this baby deserved that from me as well. I knew it wasn't fair for this BABY to DIE for me.

But fear, anxiety and denial overwhelmed me. I had the abortion. I did the deed quickly, before I could dwell on the fact that it really was a baby. I told myself, "Just do this and it will soon be over; the problem will go away." And thus began my post-abortive nightmare.

Had I gone to a Crisis Pregnancy Center, taken time to work through the shock and trauma, or if I'd heard supportive encouraging voices, I could have avoided the last 22 years of pain that have bled onto my daughter and family.

But instead of delivering a beautiful baby, I chose to kill my child. I did not pay a legal price, but the cost has been great.

I wish there had been a law to protect my unborn baby, and ultimately to protect me from a decision made in fear.

**My abortion trauma far exceeded the trauma from the rape.
I could heal from the rape; it's much harder to heal from murdering my baby.**

**During the rape, a violent act was done to me.
During the abortion, I did a more violent act and murdered my very own child.**

After the abortion, I was depressed and seeking anything to deaden my pain. I wanted to die. Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder is a serious condition resulting from a single traumatic experience or prolonged stress. Some of the signs and symptoms are physical pain, nightmares, flashbacks, depression, anxiety, withdrawal, avoidance, repression, emotional numbing, irritability, guilt, shame, and **increased suicidal risk.**

The aftermath of an abortion is a dead baby and a spiritually, physically & emotionally distraught mother. Until there is healing in Jesus Christ, we remain captive in our self-made prisons. Despite many women feeling forced by boyfriends or parents, we know that we laid on the table and we let it happen! I cannot express the devastation this created in my life.

I humbly ask the committee to listen to science, hear the unborn baby's heartbeat, and pass the Heartbeat Bill.

Thank you,

Rachelle Heidlebaugh