



## Proponent Testimony – House Bill 598 “Enact Human Life Protection Act”

Melanie Miller, Executive Director  
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Thursday, May 19, 2022

Chairman Wilkin, Vice Chair White, Ranking Member Brown, and Members of the Government Oversight Committee – thank you for the opportunity to provide proponent testimony on House Bill 598.

My name is Melanie Miller and I serve as the Executive Director of Ashland Pregnancy Care Center, a faith-based pro-life pregnancy resource center, which provides compassion, hope, and help to women and men facing critical pregnancy decisions since 1981. In the last 7 years as Executive Director, I have been trained and certified through Heartbeat International as a “Life Affirming Specialist” (LAS) and our center was awarded by the Ashland Area Chamber of Commerce as the 2018 Health & Medical Services Organization of the Year.

### When does human life begin?

At no time in your life does more growth and change occur than in the first nine months before birth. I’d like to take a moment and walk through the amazing milestones of that time in your life (*according to the facts taken from the “Precious Feet” card*).

- **1<sup>st</sup> Day** – Conception: Of the 200,000,000 sperm that try to penetrate the mother’s egg cell, only one succeeds. At that very moment, a new and unique individual is formed. All of the inherited features of this new person are already determined. We each have our own unique DNA.
- **18-20 Days** – the foundations of the brain, spinal cord, and nervous system are laid
- **21 Days** – the heart begins to beat.
- **28-32 Days** – Two tiny arms make their appearance and budding legs follow two days later. The beginnings of the mouth take shape. The nose starts to develop.
- **42 Days** – The brain is now divided into 3 parts- one to experience emotion and understand language, one for hearing and one for seeing.
- **44 Days** – Facial muscles develop. Ninety-nine muscles are present.
- **7 Weeks** – Spontaneous movement begins. The baby then develops a whole collection of moves over the next 4 weeks including hiccupping, frowning, squinting, furrowing the brow, and sucking.
- **8 Weeks** – the baby is now well-proportioned and about the size of a thumb. Every organ is present. The liver is making blood, the kidneys function, and heart beats steadily.
- **10 Weeks** – The number of connections between nerves and muscles has tripled since last week.

- **12 Weeks** – The baby swallows and responds to skin stimulation.
- **4 Months** – The baby can grip with hands, make a fist, swim, and turn somersaults.
- **7 Months** – The eyelids begin to reopen, preparing to see the outside world.
- **9 ½ Months** – The child triggers labor and birth occurs, an average of 264 to 270 days after conception.

Did you know that a heartbeat can be detected on an ultrasound as early as 5 weeks 5 days?

I have witnessed the miracle of life first-hand at the pregnancy center. Recently, a mom asked me to place my hand on her belly and say hello to her baby and call him by name. When I said “Hello baby, Ezra! This is Melanie.” Her baby inside her womb responded to my voice and kicked my hand with all his might to let me know that he is there! Or when we have performed an ultrasound and a mom speaks to her baby, it’s not unusual for her baby to respond to his mother’s voice. One time the baby in the womb did a 180 turnaround on the screen so that he was facing his mom and gave her a great big smile!

These precious children in the womb do not have a voice, and we need to be their voice.

I see and know the faces of many who have been conceived through sexual assault. Abortion in most cases, makes the trauma even worse. Two wrongs can never correct a right. I have heard firsthand where the child has been the “silver lining”—the gift or good that has come out of a tragic situation.

Many families who deeply desire to have children and are not able to have them on their own have been blessed by receiving a child through the gift of adoption.

Women who are not ready for a baby can receive help from pregnancy centers. Pregnancy centers help empower women (and men) when they are facing an unexpected or critical pregnancy decision with free and confidential services and caring support. When we end abortion in Ohio, what happens to all of the babies? Pregnancy centers are ready. Churches are ready. These groups are already loving and caring for moms and families in their time of need.

Women don’t have to choose between a career or school and a baby. With compassion, love, and support, women are strong and can succeed at both. Why does it have to be one or the other?

I have had many moms over the years tell me that their baby saved their life. When will we save their (the baby’s) life?

We need to end abortion. Abortion does not empower women. Abortion hurts women. Abortion is not safe. Abortion is never safe. Abortion ends the life of an innocent human being. And abortion causes long-term suffering and pain to the mother. Abortion can prevent a woman from having children in the future and may put her at a higher risk for breast cancer.

Women need and deserve excellent care. Women deserve the truth. Instead of abortion, women need love and support. Women need empowered to choose life – abundant life for their families.

**When should human life be protected?**

Life should be protected when life begins – at conception. I believe that a woman has the right to choose what she does with her body, but the baby is not her body. The baby is a unique person. Where is the lawyer for the baby? The Declaration of Independence addresses the right to life. It says, “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.”

The right to life is a fundamental right, and yet our smallest citizens do not have the right to life. You have the power in your hands. You can protect the most vulnerable citizens, the unborn, who do not have a voice. With the stroke of your pen, you can prevent the shedding of innocent blood for generations to come. I strongly urge you to support the Human Life Protection Act. Lives are depending on it.

Thank you for your thoughtful consideration. At this time I will answer questions from the committee.