

Julia Cattaneo
Senate Bill 23 – Six-Week Abortion Ban
Opponent Testimony
Ohio House Health Committee
March 26, 2019

Chairman Merrin, Vice Chairman Manning, Ranking Member Boyd, and Members of the Ohio House Health Committee,

Thank you for this opportunity to testify. My name is Julia Cattaneo, I am 61 years old, and my profession is Social Work and Social Services. I was born in Toledo Ohio, moved to New Jersey with my family when I was 16 years old. My son attended and was married at OSU. A year ago I moved to Columbus to be near my children and grandchildren. I am strongly opposed to the Ohio Senate Bill 23.

As I reached the age of 14, living in Toledo, I had just lost my preteen weight, had braces to fix my teeth. My 15 year old girlfriend introduced me to her friends; men ages 18 to 24 years old. At the time I did not understand that I was being groomed by these adults for sexual abuse, nor did I think at the time it was abuse. It felt cool and adult, they drove; we went to concerts, and they were our protectors and family.

They protected me so much so that when I thought I might be pregnant I discussed it with them before my parents. They did not want me to say anything to my parents. I was frightened and felt stupid for getting myself into this situation, not seeing that these adults lead me there. I was taken to a doctor. This doctor was willing to do an illegal abortion (abortion at that time was illegal in Ohio). I looked around at the place; it was dark, dirty, and smelled. Somehow I found the strength to say NO.

Two of these men agreed to fly me to NYC, where abortions were legal. I still believed they were my friends and protectors. Yes I was young and naïve. A few months later my 15 year old friend did not have the strength to say no to the doctor. After her abortion she got an infection, was afraid to tell her parents until she was very ill. She would never be able to get pregnant again. Our protectors abandoned us, we protected them.

My friend and I had been abused by adult men. I was lucky to be able to have a safe and legal abortion. That option blessed me with children and grandchildren later in life. I pray you protect the rights of other women to have safe healthcare and legal abortions. Please find the strength to VOTE NO on Senate Bill 23.

Thank you again for this opportunity to testify. I welcome any questions you may have.