

REV. JOHN T. BALL
HOUSE HEALTH COMMITTEE HEARING ON SENATE BILL 23
OPPONENT TESTIMONY | APRIL 2, 2019

Good morning Chairman Merrin, Vice Chair Manning, and Ranking Member Boyd. Thank you for allowing me to appear here today.

I am the Rev. John T. Ball, a retired United Methodist minister and the father of the Rev. David T. Ball — a minister of the American Baptist tradition who has testified before (or after) me. I have served over 40 years as an Elder in the United Methodist Church in Cincinnati, Canal Winchester, Toledo, Beavercreek, Cincinnati, Hilltop, and Pataskala, in addition to several interim appointments following retirement.

I was born in Utica in Licking County and graduated from Tippecanoe High School in Tipp City in Miami County, where the late William McCulloch was member of the U.S. House of Representatives. I attended the Ohio State University when Woody Hayes arrived and was a member of TBDBITL, the “Best Darned Band in the Land” for three years. After OSU, I graduated from The Boston University School of Theology, the oldest United Methodist seminary and where Martin Luther King, Jr. earned his Ph.D. Upon graduation, I returned to Ohio to become an ordained pastor in the West Ohio Annual Conference (1960-2001).

Until my son challenged me on the gay lesbian issue in the 1980s by writing me a letter from OWU telling me what a great sermon he heard a United Methodist minister preach the previous Sunday, I mistakenly thought this was his way of telling he was gay, which was acceptable to my understanding of the biblical mandate.

It only reminded me of the previous decade when a prominent member of my congregation told me that his high school cheerleader daughter was pregnant. This was before *Roe vs. Wade*. However, we clergy were organized for such situations, because I could call some contacts in New York state where abortions were legal and direct their daughter and another teenager and family to the airport to head for Frank Sinatra’s “Wonderful Town.”

So when a woman goes to her doctor or clinic seeking professional help with a crisis pregnancy, I ask you in this chamber to come down on the side of empathy, understanding, and courage standing against those who would restrict or totally

deny a woman's right to deal with her own body in ways she believes to be the best course of action for her.

I suspect some supporters of SB 23 are covering their hope that this "Heartbeat" bill is part of a larger strategy to block abortions altogether in the state of Ohio, and I fear such a devious plan. I believe abortion opponents are acting from a self-righteous reading of scripture and a failure to obey acting in love toward their neighbor.

Please vote against SB23. Thank you.