**Opponent Testimony**

Topic: SB 23 (6-Week Abortion Ban)

Senate Health, Human Services & Medicaid Committee

Hearing Date: Feb. 26, 2019

Submitted by: Rev. Dr. Marian Stewart

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**Chairman Burke and Ranking Member Antonio,**

When I was a child, I learned that Jesus loves me. I learned that when I had doubts or was in trouble, I could turn to him and he would listen with compassion. No matter what, Jesus loved me.

Jesus was also crucified. He was guilty! Guilty of compassion. Guilty of love. Guilty of being the fulfilment of Old Testament legalism. Jesus was guilty of setting people free in the name of love.

What I find going on here is just the opposite. Senate Bill 23 is not love. It is not compassion. Instead, it is a renewing of the legalism that traps people and binds hearts.

Most of the arguments for this proposed law are rooted in religion. But instead of asking me to believe in love, you are asking me to ignore pain. The pain of poverty. The pain of rape. The pain of incest. You are legislating a legalism that says you don’t care if the fetus I am carrying is dead, about to die, or won’t make it out of my body alive. You are legislating me to carry the burden of rape. You are forcing me to bring a child into this world that I cannot feed or support.

Sure, I can say my prayers, but you would forbid me from taking advice from my doctor. Even if I would die, you deny hard realities and tell me my life is not worth saving. You politicize my body to the point where compassion is no longer an option. By denying a life-saving procedure for me, you are telling me that despite that Sunday School lesson of long ago, I am not worthy of love.

What would you have me do? Elders tell me of passing around a metal blade. Elders tell me of friends bleeding to death. Elders tell me of coat hangers and botched abortions. We don’t have to return to this. If Jesus could set us free from legalism and lean into compassion, why can’t we?

You wonder why churches are dying. You wonder why young people no longer believe. You wonder why we’ve lost our way.

Tell me how this bill is love. Tell me how this proposed law is compassion. Tell me how you feel the pain. Tell me how I matter.

In this year when women celebrate the 100th anniversary of the right to vote, are you telling us we don’t have a choice when it comes to our bodies? Are you legislating coat hanger justice instead of compassion? Are you telling women that Jesus may love us but our bodies, our lives, don’t matter?

If you want religion to grow again, keep the laws out of and off our bodies. If you expect the people you represent to believe government has integrity, then rule with compassion – not politics. Call us to love. Give women respect, and let us decide.

I urge you to vote against S.B. 23. Thank you.

Are there any questions from the committee?