

Greater Columbus
Right to Life
Growing a Community of Life

June 20, 2016

My name is Beth Vanderkooi. I am the executive director of Greater Columbus Right to Life. We have been active in central Ohio for nearly 50 years. Our mission is to build a culture that defends innocent human life from conception until natural death. Our programs will be directly impeded by the proposed changes to 2317 of the city code, which were here to oppose. Today, I delivered more than 10,000 postcards and letters to members of city council. The vast majority of these have been sent by individuals who live or work in the City of Columbus and gathered in the two weeks that this proposal has been under consideration by Council.

Our volunteers have maintained a prayerful and peaceful presence at Central Ohio's abortion clinics for many years, most recently at Founder's Clinic on East Broad. I work very hard to make sure that our volunteers are respectful of both the laws of the city of Columbus and the dignity of all whom they encounter – even when we have differences of opinion.

At best, the enactment of 1458-2016 will have a chilling effect on our ability to exercise free speech in Columbus. At worst, it will subject us to a confusing, arbitrary, and redundant set of laws which could entrap us in the shadows and penumbras of undefined words like “annoy” and “inconvenience.” We be hard-pressed to offer clear guidance as to what is and is not acceptable within the fifteen-foot parameter, forcing us to recommend that those not wanting to risk becoming criminals be fully exiled beyond this 15-foot bubble.

If there are any bad actors or individuals engaged in bad actions, Columbus should first enforce existing laws that already protect all citizens in all public places. Rioting, failing to disperse, disorderly conduct, inducing panic, assault, and community noise ordinances could, but have not, been used to address any legitimate public safety concerns by businesses, neighbors, and the staff and patients of an abortion clinic.

A query of the Columbus police reports for the past eighteen months suggests that police are not citing individuals outside clinics with existing laws which provide broad police powers to serve the public good. This suggests: 1) There is not a problem to resolve, 2) City Police are too overwhelmed with competing major crimes for this to be a focus of their efforts, or 3) this is an attempt to use the political power of city hall to silence those whose protestations against the act of intentionally destroying innocent human life is proving effective.

This ordinance not only exiles individuals from the public sidewalks abutting abortion clinics, but will also give special protection to a class of employers, and before it does so, it should be aware of some of the actions by that class of employers. Part our efforts has included sharing documented public information about the clinics. One example: employing a doctor who had previously plead guilty to crimes involving the exploitation of minor girls. The individual

worked at the clinic for years before permanently surrendering his medical license and being indicted for child pornography eighteen months ago. Another example: the clinic's management is currently being sued by the city of Columbus for failing to pay taxes on an estimated \$1.2 million in income. Another? Friday we learned that a close associate of the clinic's management, who appeared to be working at the Founder's clinic within the last six months has been investigated for operating a narcotics pill-mill. The individual's not only opened his own clinic in Northeast Ohio, but he opened it at a location once owned by the management of Founders before the office was shut down by the DEA. These are examples, but time constraints force me to stop.

Finally, Greater Columbus Right to Life has recently filed a complaint against an officer who we believe knowingly and recklessly provided false and slanderous information at the City Council hearing on June 14th, when she indicated that pro-life volunteers lied about the individual involved in the sexual exploitation of minors referenced earlier. The officer further indicated during her remarks that at the time she was working special duty as a Columbus Police officer, she told customers of the abortion business the same thing – that this was not accurate information. This is indefensible given that the officer holds a position of trust in the community while in uniform, that she was repeatedly provided correct information by our volunteers, and that the lie served to provide cover to someone who has twice been charged in the sexual exploitation of minors.

We entreat City Council to soundly defeat this ordinance and ensure that the City of Columbus Police department has sufficient resources to enforce existing laws while responding to the serious issues that confront the public. Finally, we invite you to further investigate the business practices of those seeking special protections from you to see if its employees or practices resulted in further sexual exploitation of women and children or contributed to the distribution of narcotics wreaking havoc on our communities, likely causing many of the more pressing police matters.

Thank you. I would be happy to answer any questions that the Council may have.