

SB 145 Testimony  
Rabbi Nosanchuk  
House Criminal Justice Committee  
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There is more than one way to speak morally about reproductive rights. I certainly respect those who believe abortion is wrong. As a rabbi, however, I do not respect how Ohio leaders pretend that the only moral position is one which subverts women's reproductive freedom.

The latest proposal in Ohio, Senate Bill 145, seeks to ban the most common medical procedure for second trimester abortion. Like many of the state's restrictive policies, it forces Ohio women into a situation to accept inferior, ill-advised options from their physicians. In addition, it acts as one more step to shun a woman from seeking reproductive care from her doctor. We know worldwide how this type of obstacle only encourages the practice of unsafe, illegal abortions causing death or permanent damage to a woman body and soul.

Advocates of SB 145 often speak as though they have cornered the market on how a faith community can express a moral position regarding a pregnancy. But the moral values I share with many people of faith favor life and well-being of a woman over that of her fetus in utero.

We reject unfair restrictions that harass a woman or limit her complete agency over her own body. Indeed, members of many religious institutions are supported by their faith's teachings regarding a woman intentionally ending her pregnancy.

In Judaism, the legal codes of the Mishnah recognize life as beginning only when a fetus emerges into the world. Before that time, a woman's life, safety, and well-being are given priority. This has led to many different rabbinical rulings favoring a woman's right to an abortion if it may cause harm to her physically or brings about emotional anguish, if the fetus carries a harmful disease, or if the pregnancy was caused by rape, incest, or another form of coercive violence. While not every Jew agrees with these teachings, it is fair to say that the encroachment of a Jewish woman's right to reproductive freedom contravenes both her constitutional rights and her right to practice her faith within the boundaries of the law.

Indeed, I would personally suggest that many in the public square who fight safe, legal abortion care as a means to their own political ends are guilty of what the biblical composers called *toevah*, an abomination.

Why do women choose to get abortions? They do so for many moral reasons.

Many women who choose abortion are already raising children and struggling to make ends meet. Some of them are concerned for their pregnancies because of domestic violence in their homes. Others are anguished because their pregnancy is a result of assault or rape. They are women who never wanted to be pregnant, alongside others who actually want to be pregnant someday.

Some women get abortions because they are serving in our armed forces and need to be prepared to fight. Others choose to end their pregnancy because they just started high school or college. They make these decisions in their homes and our neighborhoods and often after consulting their religious leaders.

In this moment, all of Ohio's women should be able to consult with a doctor about the range of legal and safe procedures available to them. I pray that Senate Bill 145 will be rejected, because each woman deserves the dignity and respect to make her own reproductive decisions. Indeed, that is the morally right thing to do.

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