

Opponent Testimony on Senate Bill 145
Abortion Method Ban
Criminal Justice Committee
Susan Reis on behalf of the National Council of Jewish Women
Tuesday February 13, 2018

Chairman Manning and Ranking Minority Member Celebrezze:

My name is Susan Reis and I am the State Policy Advocate in Ohio for National Council of Jewish Women (NCJW.) We are an organization of 90,000 members and supporters across the country and 2500 members and supporters in Ohio, dedicated to social justice by improving the quality of life for women, children and families. One of our focuses at NCJW is reproductive health, rights, and justice. Among other things, we work on issues of health care access and infant and maternal mortality. From our work at NCJW we know that a person's right to abortion and the full spectrum of reproductive care is an essential component of a healthy community - and a fundamental element of our religious liberty. Banning the most effective and safest procedure for second trimester abortions will not make abortions safer or less necessary, but will put people's health at risk.

For these reasons and more, we are strongly opposed to Senate Bill 145, which would ban the most commonly used abortion procedure for second trimester abortions (which begins at the 13th week of pregnancy.) Not only is this ban unconstitutional, as the ACLU and NARAL Pro-Choice Ohio so clearly outlined in their testimony, but it ties the hands of medical practitioners to use a procedure that is the most effective and safest procedure for their patients, based on evidence and medical protocol.

Instead of using Ohio's limited tax dollars to defend this unconstitutional ban, we believe our taxpayer dollars should be spent in areas that have been proven to provide support for health care – including access to prenatal health care, better access to reproductive healthcare such as fertility treatment and contraception, paid maternity leave and accurate, comprehensive sex education. Ohio continues to have one of the highest rates of infant mortality in the country, specifically among black women. If we truly care about children, we should be spending our dollars on preventing those deaths – many of which are caused by a lack of access to reproductive healthcare.

NCJW is also concerned about this bill from a faith standpoint. The Constitution guarantees everyone in the United States the right to practice their own religion –and ensures that government cannot interfere with the practice of it. Yet, the abortion method ban is a violation of Judaism's own belief system which dictates that when it comes to reproduction, the health and life of a mother always come before the potential life of a fetus. Jewish sources explicitly indicate that if the continuation of the pregnancy might imperil the life or health of the mother, abortion is not only allowed, it is required. And health does not just mean a medically life-threatening condition – it also encompasses a woman's mental health and well-being. We understand and respect that every religion has its own belief systems around the issues of abortion. Freedom of

religion means freedom *from* religion. Therefore, we do not believe that another's religious beliefs on this issue should be allowed to supersede our own.

Polls consistently show that 7 in 10 Americans support legal access to abortion. This very personal medical decision is something that should be made by an individual, their family, their doctor and their clergy - if they choose to include them. It is not a decision that should be made by legislators.

For these reasons, National Council of Jewish Women strongly opposes Senate Bill 145.

It's time for lawmakers to stop interfering with our right to religious freedom and the private lives of individuals and families, and instead focus on policies that will support healthy communities and pregnancies, such as HB 248, which aims to offer comprehensive sex education for teens and full access to contraceptives for women.

Thank you for taking the time to read this testimony.

Susan Reis

National Council of Jewish Women Cleveland) inspired by Jewish values to advance social and economic justice for all women, children and families.

*National Council of Jewish Women Cleveland
26055 Emery Road
Warrensville Heights OH 44128
216-378-2204
www.ncjwcleveland.org*