

HB 258 Opponent Testimony: Zaynah Chaudhury  
Senate Health, Human Services, and Medicaid Committee  
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As a young female student, it is horrifying to imagine living in a place that would take away my choice on whether or not I am ready to care for a child. Even more disturbingly, in many college campuses there has been an ample number of instances of sexual assault. Women are already faced with the fear of being sexually assaulted but knowing that they may also be forced to carry their abuser's child is unfathomable.

Historically, women have gone through life threatening extremes to have an abortion. Growing up in a family of doctors and lawyers, I have understood how dangerous an abortion can be if it is not safe, legal, and accessible via medical providers in their communities. This is why many women are faced with the challenge of finding and traveling to a clinic hundreds of miles away to have a safe abortion with the essential medical treatment. If a woman is not financially nor emotionally ready to care for a child, then that will not only be detrimental for her own health, but will also determine a poor quality of life for the child who will not be getting the attention and care he or she deserves.

My family migrated from Bangladesh and Pakistan. For many South Asians, being a woman is essentially shameful. A tremendous number of women from that subcontinent are known to illegally obtain ultrasounds and abort their fetus once it is determined that the child is female. Mothers are terrified that their daughters will share their same fate and have the same horrific experiences as they have had. Therefore, they believe it is justice to not bring them into similar situations where women are unable to have control over their lives. However, many South Asian men are against birth control and using contraceptives, either because they believe it to be a sin or they just simply find it irritating. The hypocrisy leaves the women vulnerable with no choice on their bodies or their babies.

The United States has always been viewed as a country of freedom which is why it is home to people from all over the world. People risk their lives to come here in order to obtain and keep their freedoms as granted by the Constitution. Ohio should remember the diverse amount of people who reside in this state and proudly display its love for freedom. People come from so many different backgrounds and have many different reasons for the choices they make. Women should not be excluded from making their own decisions, no matter what the reason may be. Women being able to choose what to do with their bodies is a freedom that should be celebrated in Ohio.

Ohio has been my home for the past eleven years and I plan to attend law school after graduating from college. I will continue my fight on helping women attain their rights and being able to choose if they wish to or not wish to have an abortion. I hope Ohio chooses to stand by women of all backgrounds by giving them the choice to do what they wish to do with their bodies and most importantly, their futures.