

Testimony of Keleigh Cook
Senate Health, Human Services and Medicaid Committee
H.B. 258

Chairman Burke, Ranking Member Tavares and members of the Senate Health, Human Services and Medicaid committee, my name is Keleigh Cook. I am a Columbus resident.

I write to you today to ask you not to let this bill out of committee. When I was twenty-two years old, a new boyfriend sabotaged the birth control we were using in order to purposefully impregnate me to keep me in a relationship with him. I was in college and did not realize that I was pregnant until I was about 6-7 weeks. I remember walking in a blizzard to get to the store in order to confirm what I suspected. It was not stress from finals making me nauseous. The irregularity of my menstruation cycle had never been THIS irregular. Even confirming it then, it took me several days to acquire an appointment to confirm with a doctor. When that happened, I knew instantly I was not able to be anyone's mother yet. I had a part time job, no financial support other than student loans, no family support to speak of, and a new partner who I did not know well enough yet to determine what kind of parenting partner they would be.

It took three more weeks from doctor confirmation to my appointment to obtain my abortion. I was a white woman living in a small city with transportation services, access to funding assistance, and it still was about a five week period from when I first realized I might be pregnant, to obtaining the procedure I needed in order to no longer be. I was not born into poverty, and I had no intention of birthing anyone else into it either. If it was that easy for me and it still took that long, what about people who live in a small town far from the closest clinic in the River Valley?

I moved to Ohio as an adult, with the hope of enjoying a place with opportunity for economic prosperity, and that I could enjoy with my family. I had visions of a small business, engaging with artists and creative types, while enjoying hiking and camping. I had a vision for a simple life. I have not found it here. I have found a region set on limiting equality and equity for pregnant people and mothers. I have sat in the rafters and watched a legislature so singularly minded on the issue of abortion, they have continued to ignore cries from constituents for support to make it easier to prevent the need for abortion in the first place.

I have decided to move my family out of Ohio, because the legislature refuses to take action to reasonably protect the commonwealth. There is no economic future for women in a state where the male dominated legislature is determined to dictate the firmest of grasps over their reproductive autonomy. I urge you to vote no on this bill. It is too extreme for Ohio.