

## **Testimony in Opposition to House Bill 258**

**Submitted to: Ohio Senate  
Health, Human Services, and Medicaid Committee**

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Chairman Burke and members of the committee, thank you for the opportunity to testify in opposition to House Bill 258. In my role as the Chairman of Ohio's Democratic Party, I don't often offer testimony on legislative issues, but this bill's drastic, dangerous attacks on women and families in Ohio moved me to speak up, as it has so many other women and men.

I've never had an abortion, and I never will. I can't claim to understand what it must feel like to be pregnant when you don't want to be. However, I do know the statistics -- about one in four American women will have an abortion.<sup>1</sup> In fact, it is one of the most commonly performed medical procedures in the United States. More than 20,000 abortions were performed in Ohio in 2017 alone.<sup>2</sup>

If passed, HB 258 will eliminate virtually all access to legal abortion care in Ohio. Without access to legal, accessible abortion and the ability to decide if, when, and how they become parents, women around Ohio will lack a crucial piece of the freedom and autonomy they need to achieve their personal or professional goals. Something as simple and common as a missed birth control pill or a broken condom will have the potential to derail entire careers and lives.

I spent most of 2018 traveling around the state of Ohio meeting candidates, community leaders, and voters in every town you can think of. There was no more impactful aspect of being on the road this year than meeting the amazing women who are stepping up to lead their communities. The women I met were moms and teachers, doctors and lawyers, business owners and veterans—veterans who'd flown missions over Iraq and Afghanistan and who'd served in intelligence roles in those same war zones. Whether they're running for office or working behind the scenes to create change, they're all experts in their fields, totally capable, and fiercely independent. I trust these women to create a brighter future for Ohio and I trust them to make their own healthcare decisions. HB 258 and other attacks on abortion care over the years only make it harder for women to participate fully in society.

This week, I listened to three brave young women share their abortion stories on the steps of the statehouse. They spoke of unintended pregnancies, of abusive relationships, and of the relief they felt when they were able to access the abortion care they needed and move on with their lives as planned. That's why our parents' generation fought so hard for the protections of *Roe v. Wade* and it's a right I want future generations of Ohioans to experience.

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.gutmacher.org/news-release/2017/abortion-common-experience-us-women-despite-dramatic-declines-rates>

<sup>2</sup> <https://odh.ohio.gov/-/media/ODH/ASSETS/Files/health-statistics---vital-stats/Induced-Abortions-in-Ohio-2017.pdf?la=en>

Chairman Burke and members of this committee, I urge you to let this bill expire without further action. With it, I hope you'll also be willing to let go of this obsession with controlling women's bodies and lives.