



**Testimony of Elaina Ramsey
Executive Director of Ohio RCRC
Senate Health, Human Services, and Medicaid Committee
House Bill 258
December 5, 2018**

Good afternoon Chairman Burke, Ranking Member Tavares, and members of the Senate Health, Human Services, and Medicaid Committee. My name is Elaina Ramsey. I am honored to serve as the executive director of the Ohio Religious Coalition for Reproductive Choice and am here today to speak out against House Bill 258.

In my work, I have the honor of representing thousands of Ohioans whose deep faith informs their values regarding reproductive health, rights, and justice. Folks like our Jewish and Catholic kin who joined us for a rally yesterday outside the Statehouse to faithfully speak out against this heartless bill.

I am proud to stand with these faith leaders and allies any day of the week, but you might be surprised to know that I wasn't always pro-choice. In fact, I use to be a lot more like the religious people you heard yesterday during proponent testimony for this very bill.

Raised in southern Ohio, I once subscribed to a black and white understanding of Christianity that judged and condemned most anyone who didn't support my narrow understanding of the Bible, which of course considered abortion and sex before marriage as sinful.

But then, during my senior year of college at Capital University, my whole world came undone when I was raped by a trusted Christian friend. It has taken me the better part of a decade to come to terms with this trauma, and I still carry it with me.

I know all too well what it's like to endure the assault of one's body and dignity, only to then wrestle with one's conscience and faith when facing the agonizing possibility of a rape-induced pregnancy. No person should be forced to carry a pregnancy against their will — no matter the circumstance.

As a survivor leader and a committed Christian, I am deeply disturbed by this unconstitutional bill which contains no exceptions for rape or incest. This proposed law which revokes consent and forces pregnancy is cruel at best and immoral at worst.

There is nothing more holy than the freedom to exercise one's own conscience and moral authority. The decisions of if, when, and how to become a parent are deeply personal and sacred. These matters are best left for a person to discern for themselves in consultation with their family, their god, and their doctor — all without political interference.

To be clear, this bill is not about life. If it were about life, then we wouldn't treat women as if their worth is only in their womb. If it were about life, we would care just as deeply about the children in our midst and provide them with safer schools and health care. If it were about life, we would not be wasting taxpayer dollars fighting this unconstitutional bill and instead invest our resources to support working parents and to fund comprehensive sex education.

It is time to stop polarizing and politicizing women's bodies. Abortion is reproductive health care. And we must work toward a compassionate society in which children are born wanted and loved, and welcomed into a safe community that provides for their needs.

I urge you to vote against H.B. 258. Anything less dishonors and violates the lived experiences and moral agency of Ohioans, including survivors of rape and incest.

Thank you for your time, and I welcome your questions.