

Greetings, Chairman Burke, Ranking Member Tavares, and members of the committee. My name is Renata Reuenthal, and I'm a medical student (though my views are my own and not representative of my medical college). I am also an aspiring OB/GYN, and - not least of all - a fertile woman. It is all of these identities, professional and personal, that compel me before you today to speak in opposition to HB 258, the proposed six-week abortion ban.

Before attending medical school, I worked in (and for a time, supervised) an abortion clinic. In this role, I provided support to patients in innumerable ways, from scheduling appointments, to assisting with procedures, to providing blankets and ginger ale. I also helped patients in ways you may not expect, such as with establishing prenatal care, contacting adoption agencies, and counseling on family planning to reduce the likelihood of return visits. As an abortion care worker, my role was not to pressure vulnerable people into ending their pregnancies for my own profit; rather, my role was simply to support patients' choices in whatever way I could. And every day, patients responded with earnest and heartfelt gratitude, the depths of which I had never witnessed before.

It was my work in abortion care that inspired me to pursue a medical degree, and while my skillset as a physician will be different, my job will essentially be the same: to provide patients with medical support for their pregnancy and family planning decisions, and to treat them like experts on their own livelihoods.

I am proud to call myself a lifelong Ohioan, and I would love nothing more than to give back to my home state as a practicing physician. However, if Ohio enacts a six-week abortion ban - outlawing the procedure before many people even realize they are pregnant - then I will not be able to train adequately in Ohio. I will not be able to provide comprehensive, compassionate, evidence-based care to my patients, in alignment with both my medical knowledge and my conscience. In truth, I will not even feel safe to pursue my own long-held dream of motherhood, as my husband and I won't have a full grip on the reins to make personal medical decisions about our family. And sadly, I know that many of my peers are reaching similar conclusions.

I am not here today to change anyone's heart or mind about abortion; I see little utility in quibbling over the "right" answers to philosophic, fundamentally unknowable questions. However, I know that we are all guided in this world by our personal beliefs. So, if you believe like I do that Ohio must retain medical talent by honoring the doctor-patient relationship, that government must not overreach into matters of the family, and that pregnant people must be treated with dignity and respect, then I urge you to manifest those beliefs by opposing this bill.

I would be happy to answer any questions the committee members may have.