

Testimony of Chrissy France, Executive Director, Preterm

Senate Health, Human Services, and Medicaid Committee

December 11, 2018

I respectfully write today to voice our organization's opposition to House Bill 258, a bill that would effectively outlaw abortion in Ohio before most women know they are pregnant, criminalize the procedure, and could potentially outlaw many kinds of birth control that prevent unwanted pregnancies.

Here at Preterm, we are experts in comprehensive women's reproductive healthcare, providing high quality care for 45 years to more than a quarter million women. I write not only on behalf of myself, but also the people who will be impacted by HB 258 the most: our patients who know what is best for their own lives and their own bodies, our physicians, who provide thousands of lifesaving medical procedures every year, and our clinic staff who support our patients and physicians at each and every level to provide the safest and highest quality care.

HB 258 will not result in fewer people needing abortion care, nor will it result in fewer unplanned pregnancies. Women have abortions for many different reasons and this bill doesn't address any of the inequities that people cite for making the decision to have an abortion. It won't provide support for struggling families which Ohioans desperately need. It won't provide educational opportunities to lift people out of generational poverty. It won't provide adequate health care to help women have healthy and safe pregnancies and births. It won't address the structural racism that makes Ohio have one of the highest rates of maternal and infant mortality in the nation.

What it will do is force women into desperate situations. Women who do not want to be pregnant or know that they cannot bear children that they can't support emotionally or financially will do just about anything to end the pregnancy. Making abortion inaccessible or illegal only makes it unsafe. We do not want see Ohio women suffer or die.

Last year, residents from each of your districts received abortion care. They did so in safe, well regulated clinics. The women in your district know what is right for their lives, their families, and their bodies. Most are already mothers, they know what it takes to be a parent. They are mothers, wives, daughters, and friends. They are people. And they count on clinics like Preterm for safe, effective care. Care that includes birth control, contraception, wellness exams, and abortion.

The voices of our patients are the most important for you to hear. The quotes included in this letter were written by patients and their loved ones while in the waiting room at Preterm. Please take their words to heart as you consider how to vote on HB 258.

I am here today to support my daughter. She is 14 years old and was assaulted. This decision was hers to make. I stand beside her and all women 100%. As a woman that has been in your shoes before I understand the hard decision you had to make. Your body, your choice.

--A mother, a survivor, a friend

I'm not going to lie, I'm a nervous wreck waiting here right now. But, this is the best decision for everyone involved. It doesn't matter what your reason is for doing this, that's your business. Just

remember, you are making the best, although potentially hard choice for you and your future.
Women are beautiful, talented, special, and have a purpose.

-- Alana

I always believed in pro-choice, but not my choice. Until it had to be my choice. Or rather, my daughter's choice. Because it is her choice. I raised her to be independent and make strong decisions. Today, this is one of her decisions. All I can do is stand with her.

-- Anonymous

Your vote will decide whether the women and people who use our services every day can continue to seek the medical care they know is right for their lives and bodies with the guidance, support, and expertise of trained medical professions, or whether those people will have to seek out abortion services that are unregulated on their own, with only the assistance of the internet.

Sincerely yours,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Chrissy France".

Chrissy France M.Ed.

Executive Director