

Dear Chairman Merin and Representative Boyd,

Those of us born with wombs are not voiceless vessels. We are not incubators. We are not the concubines of movements whose moral compass instructs them to deny us autonomy. Our bodies should not be treated as the sole piece of incriminating evidence when conception is the result of violation and violence. And yet, each time the Ohio legislature further restricts abortion access for the thousands of constituents who need it, the State of Ohio treats us as such.

Abortion access does not make the womb the most dangerous place for a child. Inequitable healthcare, pandemic racism, physicians lacking cultural competency, and legislators better suited for leadership within private places of worship instead of public service make the womb the most dangerous place for a child.

It is legislators, such as the Senators who sponsored SB 23 whom with the exception of Senator Stephen Huffman, have no medical training, no formal education in public health, and no training in social work yet take it upon themselves to draft bills that would adversely impact the health of their tax paying constituents who make the womb the most dangerous place for a child. And this danger extends far beyond pregnancy, Ohio's abysmal maternal and infant mortality rates are proof that the legislature Ohioans vote in to protect and serve us, is actually working to debilitate and destroy us.

There are scholarly articles detailing rigorous studies that show limiting abortion access contributes to poor maternal health outcomes. And there are countless examples, both historical and modern day, that show societies in which the thriving health of women and children directly correlate to the overall wellbeing and prosperity of all.

Abortion is healthcare. Abortion is a life saving procedure. As a Christian who has had an abortion I firmly believe that the experience itself and ability to access abortion was a blessing for me. Abortion validated the sanctity of grace, mercy, and free will. As a Black woman who has had an abortion I firmly believe that my ability to act as an autonomous being was the result of my enslaved ancestors praying that the generations to come had a different lived reality.

Those of us born with wombs, regardless of the lives we lead, are valuable. We are worthy, and we are deserving to be treated as full citizens in the state we reside. If Senate Bill 23 is enacted it will effectively make us and our wombs wards of the state, stripping us of our rights to make decisions for ourselves, our families, our bodies, and our lives.

Respectfully Submitted,
Ashley Underwood