

Testimony of Jordyn K. Close

House Health Committee

S.B. 23

March 26, 2019

Good afternoon, Chairman Merrin, Ranking Member Boyd and members of the House Health committee. My name is Jordyn Close. I am the state coordinator with URGE: Unite For Reproductive and Gender Equity, I am a storyteller with Youth Testify, a leadership program of the National Network of Abortion Funds and Advocates for Youth, I serve on the board of Women Have Options- Ohio, an abortion fund, and I have had an abortion.

When I was 18, I found out I was pregnant when I was 7 or 8 weeks along -- that means under SB 23 I wouldn't have been able to get an abortion at all. My rights would have been stripped from me before I knew I needed them.

I knew immediately that choosing to end my pregnancy was the right choice for me. At the time I was living in Logan County. I was surrounded by messages telling me that abortion was wrong. There was little to no compassion for any decision to have an abortion, let alone just not wanting to be pregnant. Almost every single time a heartbeat bill is introduced and in various anti choice rhetoric, I've heard the comparison between abortion and slavery, abortion and the holocaust, etc. It is appalling. It happens regularly in this debate. Not only is it stigmatizing like the billboards in my community, but it's disrespectful to my ancestors who fought hard to escape the terrors of slavery and forced reproduction, sometimes choosing abortion because they couldn't bear to raise a child in captivity. To compare abortion to slavery is not only ahistorical, but it makes a mockery of all that our ancestors went through. As a Black woman I am dismayed that this argument would be used to deny me access to basic healthcare.

Fortunately, when I needed an abortion, I was able to get one. We hadn't lost half of the clinics in the state at that point in time. I found the nearest clinic in Columbus; it was called Founders, a little over an hour away from my home.

When I got there, I was completely surprised by the level of compassion and care that the clinic staff provided to me. From the woman at the front desk to the nurses that took care of me afterward, their kindness and support reaffirmed the choice that I already knew was right for me.

The most memorable parts of my experience was everyone who was in the waiting room with me. I had never been around people so willing to openly share their stories. Their real life, human stories without their choices being used as political pawns.

I have been hesitant to tell my story so publicly because to me it seems to pale in comparison to other stories I have heard and the lengths those people had to go through to receive basic healthcare. Transportation, raising money, emotional support, time off of work, things that add

onto the burden because of bills like these, those were all thing that I could handle. I did have to wait a few weeks to get an abortion, and a bill like this, on top of the countless trap laws that have been introduced in our state, would have made those weeks impossible to wait and I would have never gotten my abortion..

When HB 493 was introduced in 2016, I went public with my story for the first time on Facebook. It was too important not to. This is why I am here today testifying in opposition to SB 23. Outlawing abortion will not stop people from needing abortion care. It will just make it so much harder than it already is for people to get access. Ohioans should not have to travel out of state just to get a 5-minute medical procedure. And the right to that procedure should not be stripped from us before we even know we're pregnant or have a moment to weigh our options. May I remind you that "six weeks pregnant" is only TWO weeks after a missed period. The Ohio state legislature should be protecting our constitutional rights, not regularly passing laws that undermine them. Every single one of you listening to my testimony loves someone who had an abortion, although you may not know it yet.

I never wavered in my decision. I never questioned what was right for me. I am happy with the decision I made. I will shout it from the rooftops if necessary. I will never regret my decision to have an abortion. Abortion is necessary. Abortion is healthcare.