



**Testimony of Stephanie Craddock Sherwood,  
Executive Director of Women Have Options - Ohio,  
House Health Committee  
Senate Bill 23  
March 26, 2019**

Chairman Merrin, Ranking Member Boyd, and members of the House Health Committee, thank you for the opportunity to testify in opposition to Senate Bill 23. My name is Stephanie Craddock Sherwood and I am the Executive Director of Women Have Options - Ohio, we are Ohio's abortion fund. I am here to testify on behalf of the tens of thousands of women and those seeking abortion care whose reproductive health care we have helped pay for and to share how devastating this bill will be for pregnant folks in Ohio.

I would paint you a picture of who we serve, but no two stories are alike. They come from all corners of the state- they are folks you represent. What they all have in common though is that they need access to safe and legal abortion and they don't have the access to it. They need help. These are mostly mothers, who are struggling to raise the children they have. There are many who share their stories of recent job losses, homelessness, or how they are leaving an abusive partner. We hear the stories of many who are trying to recover from drug addiction and need a new start. Many have health issues that prevent them from having a healthy pregnancy.

Plain and simple, abortion bans are dangerous, out of touch with the real lived experiences of these folks, and this bill won't change the need for abortion access. It just works to set up roadblocks to those who need it most. The people we serve won't stop choosing to have abortions just because it's illegal. Much like women from Ireland recently had to travel to England to terminate their pregnancies because of prohibitive abortion

laws, Ohioans would be forced to travel to other states or terminate their pregnancies by potentially unsafe means. And they will.

Our mission is to ensure that abortion is not just a theoretical possibility, but actually and practically accessible no matter how much money people have. People will continue to seek abortions just as they did before 1973. The financially secure will always have access to the resources necessary to exercise their reproductive choices. But for the poor, every additional hurdle comes with a higher price tag and this ban demonstrates a shocking disconnect from the everyday obstacles that disproportionately affect people of color, people with low incomes, and people in rural areas.

Based on the calls for help, we get we know firsthand the panic patients experience and hustle they have to engage in to access the care they need, having to make two appointments to the clinic and gathering the required money, possibly having to dip into meager savings. For most, exercising their right to abortion care means making arrangements for childcare, taking time off from school or work, and putting off paying bills or buying fewer groceries to afford the additional expenses, like travel. And that is after they make their appointment at a clinic, and it can sometimes take weeks to get in. Again, out of touch with the reality of Ohioans seeking abortion care.

In closing, many of those most likely to be impacted by this ban are already facing challenging circumstances. And targeting abortion access is particularly harmful, especially for those who need it most. We do this work because we believe that people should be able to access abortion no matter their race, socioeconomic status, age, gender identity, or where they live. Every year, hundreds of folks contact Women Have Options seeking help funding their abortion, and they tell us the stories of their hopes and dreams, they tell us about their families—or the families they hope to have one day. Their abortion helps them stay in school, care for their families, and live their best lives. On behalf of these Ohioans, I urge the committee to vote against this bill.