

Emily Witter
Senate Bill 23 – Six-Week Abortion Ban
Opponent Testimony
Ohio House Health Committee
March 26, 2019

Chairman Merrin, Vice Chair Manning, Ranking Boyd, and Members of the Ohio House Committee,

Thank you for allowing me the time to testify today. I come before you as a student, a citizen of Ohio, and someone who has had an abortion. I urge you to vote against SB 23 because it would take away safe and legal abortion access and contribute to the incorrect stigma and fear that abortion is wrong and dangerous.

When I found out I was pregnant, I told my partner at the time, my mother, and a friend. None of them originally wanted me to get the procedure, but I knew that it was the best choice for me in order to achieve my dreams of going to college and becoming a public defender. It was really hard to find information on where to go due to crisis pregnancy centers that purposely mislead that they support all-options of family planning when they really exist to prevent people from getting an abortion. The people I told were unable to help as they also did not know where I should go and were generally not supportive of abortion.

Sure in my choice, I found Capital Care Network of Toledo, the only abortion provider in Northwest Ohio. On the day of my appointment, both my mom and partner went with me to care for me after the procedure. Even though they still did not want me to get the procedure due to the stereotype of an abortion doing psychological damage to the patient, they chose to be there with me because they cared about me. They also recognized that the decisions about my body belong to me alone.

The thing I remember most about getting an abortion is the compassionate care I received from the staff of Capital Care. The entire time I was there, they gave me full support and confidence in my decision, and kept me at ease while it happened. The staff spent the whole time asking about my dreams and what I want to accomplish in my life. I had been confident with my choice before going to Capital Care, but it was truly at this moment I realized that everything was going to be okay and that it was not scary at all. This moment would allow me to go to college and achieve my dreams.

After my procedure, my mom and my partner also had a realization: the abortion did not do any of the harm that is supposed to come to patients. By seeing someone they love have this procedure, they were able to unlearn the stigma that abortion is harmful. The harm that happened actually came from the stereotypes that groups sponsoring this bill push. The only thing I lost on the day I had my abortion was the friend I had originally confided to about my unwanted pregnancy, the stigma being too much for them to overcome.

When I had to make the choice, I was so scared, and I do not want others to feel that way or feel that they do not have a choice. Everyone's terms for getting an abortion are different, and that is okay. Abortion is not scary. Abortion is not wrong for those who make the decision. Abortion is one of the safest medical procedures there is, especially in contrast to giving birth in the state of Ohio. Abortion is a choice between medical providers and patients, not for

politicians who want to play doctor. Please keep anti-abortion stigma, and protect the separation of church and state, by voting against SB 23.