

Chairman Merrin, Vice Chair Manning, Ranking Member Boyd, and members of the House Health, Human Services, and Medicaid Committee, thank you for the opportunity to testify in opposition to House Bill 90, the miseducation bill. My name is Kimberley Mason. I am an alumni from the University of Cincinnati, health educator, abortion doula, reproductive justice advocate, and constituent of Hamilton County, Ohio.

As a community health professional with two master's degrees, I have extensively studied health education and abortion stigma. House Bill 90 raises many questions and concerns. It is quite evident, as I'm sure you know, that this bill is anti-abortion propaganda and will attract only grantees that intend to reinforce your own morals regarding sexuality. The heavy focus on fetal development and media campaign within this legislation which "clearly and consistently states that abortion kills a living human being" is founded on personal principles and carries no scientific or medical substance. These arguments also propel the stigma surrounding abortion, which seeks to dehumanize individuals seeking abortion, those providing abortion care, and those who support abortion rights. This language has been known to incite violence as evidenced over the past several decades by the murder of physicians, the bombing of and attacks on *health* facilities, as well as frequent threats and harassment to those providing and seeking abortion care.

The information in this bill does not clearly define the spectrum of pregnancy. Instructors implementing this program apparently need no qualifications to educate youth and young adults. This legislation provides no standards or expectation for them to share medically accurate, inclusive, unbiased education regarding anatomy, pregnancy, and birth control. Would instructors of this program share information on the very serious health risks and complications of pregnancy at all ages and stages? Would they be prepared to discuss the compounding hardships of adolescent pregnancy? Would they be able to explain the racist-driven infant and maternal mortality rates, for which Ohio ranks among the worst in this country? Without proper qualifications or standards, it seems impossible that instructors would be able to provide students with information for them to make a fully informed decision about their sexual and reproductive health. Thus, this legislation is a threat to individual autonomy. When provided with all the *facts*, I believe youth and other individuals will make the best decision for their health and their families.

Comprehensive, medically accurate, unbiased, inclusive sexual health education saves lives. It increases the communication between a child and their parent/guardian. It delays sexual initiation. When provided before college, it can reduce the risk of experiencing sexual assault in college.

A decision to approve this harmful legislation has consequences for you and the constituents you are suppose to represent. Thank you for hearing my testimony and I will now take any questions.

-Kimberley Mason

