

**Emily Heiden**  
**House Bill 297**  
**Opponent Testimony**  
**Ohio House Ways and Means Committee**  
**November 11, 2019**

Chairman Merrin, Vice Chair LaRe, Ranking Member Rogers, and Members of the Ohio House Ways and Means Committee, thank you for allowing me to testify today. My name is Emily Heiden. I am a doctoral student at the University of Cincinnati studying literature and writing. I teach classes at the university and am currently writing my dissertation. I am strongly opposed to HB 297.

I am here to talk to you today because in 2013 I was pregnant. It was unplanned and a definite shock. And in that time of shock, I was very vulnerable. I wanted unbiased guidance from someone who didn't know me; a trained counselor to talk over my options. I went online and typed in pregnancy options and pregnancy help. An organization came up and I went to their website. They promised guidance without politics or hype. Those were the words they used. I went to their clinic the following day. When I was there the woman who greeted me got me comfortable in an office on a green couch, gave me a cookie and a water bottle, and asked me what she called a series of dry, boring medical questions. She asked if I wanted a free pregnancy test. She listened to my story, and I was so relieved to be in the hands of what I thought was a professional.

After that, she asked if we could speak about something very important to her. She handed me a pamphlet entitled "May I Ask You a Question?" which proved to be all about God, the Bible, sin, and death. In that moment I was stunned. I am not religious and was not seeking religious guidance. I believed at the time that because 50% of all pregnancies in the United States each year are unplanned that there must be impartial professional organizations set up to counsel confused pregnant women. However, in that moment my hopes were largely dashed as I realized, sitting on that couch, that I had been deceived. I froze up and listened numbly as she continued talking. She showed me another pamphlet with distorted fetal development information. Some of the numbers in the book were printed in large, bold lettering to make the person reading it think they were further along in gestation than they actually were. This pamphlet was called Before You Decide, and although the clinic I went to was in Virginia, I know from an interview I later conducted with the director of Life Forward Cincinnati that this same pamphlet is used in pregnancy centers in Ohio.

The counselor also showed me a video that told me if I had an abortion I would bleed out on the table and die; or my uterus would rupture; that I would get breast cancer; become infertile, and so forth. I knew those things weren't true. I later discovered that according to a 2012 study published in the academic journal *Obstetrics and Gynecology*, a woman is 14 times more likely to die in childbirth than during a legal abortion. Additionally, the American College of

Obstetricians and Gynecologists (ACOG) and the National Cancer Institute (NCI) have agreed that scientific evidence does not support a link between abortion and breast cancer. I could go on but the point is that the counselor in that clinic told me lies. She promoted fake science. Ohio women deserve better than this.

This clinic was run by the parent company Care Net, which is a national organization that operates 109 pregnancy centers in Ohio. These are the organizations this bill would help. In part, this bill encourages people to donate money to these places, which deliberately manipulate women like me. It is my hope that Ohio legislators will hear my story and consider the reality of what goes on in these places and the plight of vulnerable, pregnant people. We deserve real medical care at such difficult times. We deserve to choose to continue or end our pregnancies based on valid scientific information and honest counsel. It is fundamentally wrong that we should be lied to and made to fear for our health and our lives.

I ask you to consider my testimony and vote no on this harmful, dangerous bill. Thank you again for the opportunity to testify.

I will now take any questions you may have.