John B. Casterline
Interested Party Testimony
Senate Bill 23
Ohio Senate Health, Human Services and Medicaid Committee

Chairman Burke, Vice Chair Huffman and Ranking Member Antonio and Members of the Health, Human Services and Medicaid Committee.

My name is John Casterline, and I am testifying today on SB 23 as a citizen of Ohio. I am an academic/researcher specializing in demography and public health. I earned my MA and PhD from the University of Michigan. I am currently Lazarus Professor in Population Studies at The Ohio State University, and I serve as President of the Population Association of America, the leading organization for researchers in demography.

Scientists have conducted extensive research on the question: what are the consequences of unintended births?1. At issue are consequences for children, for families, and for communities. In this testimony, I will share with you the main conclusions from this research, namely:
1. Children who were unintended births rate poorly on health indicators and other aspects of child development.
2. The siblings of unintended births also suffer negative consequences.
3. The parents of unintended births show worse emotional well-being, and their relationships are more likely to break up.

Researchers classify a pregnancy as “unintended” if a woman says that she did not want to have a child at the time she became pregnant. Overall, about one-third of births in the United States result from an unintended pregnancy. Women who seek induced abortions are women with an unintended pregnancy; if they do not obtain the abortion, then an unintended birth will occur.

First, the disadvantage of the child. Children born from an unintended pregnancy are disadvantaged in many respects. The mother receives less prenatal care, and the babies are more likely to be low birthweight. These children are less likely to be breastfed. Later, these children are in worse health2, and they show slower socio-emotional development3. Even in young adulthood, these children have achieved less in school and show more symptoms of depression4.

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The negative effects ripple through the family: research shows that the older siblings of an unintended birth receive less family support and resources\textsuperscript{5}.

I should add that the main reason women give for seeking an abortion is their concern that they will be unable to provide the care and resources to the child and its siblings that they would like. Empirical research shows this reason is valid.

Finally, the effects on parents. Research shows that unintended births are detrimental for the mental health of both mothers and fathers (especially mothers)\textsuperscript{6}. Considering this, it is not surprising that having an unintended birth increases the chances that a relationship will break up\textsuperscript{7}.

This is my concise summary of a large body of empirical evidence. Thank you for your attention. I would be happy to answer any questions that you may have.

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\textsuperscript{5} As measured by the HOME score, a validated scale used to assess conditions in the home that contribute to child development, for example age-appropriate learning materials and parental interaction styles. Barber, J. S., & East, P. L. (2011). Children’s experiences after the unintended birth of a sibling. \textit{Demography}, \textit{48}(1), 101-125.
