

Testimony of Chrissy France, Executive Director, Preterm

Senate Health, Human Services, and Medicaid Committee

March 26, 2019

I respectfully write today to voice our organization's opposition to Senate Bill 27, a bill that will significantly limit access to safe, legal abortion care by requiring medically unnecessary burial or cremation of fetal tissue following an abortion.

This bill works to capitalize on the onslaught of anti-abortion legislation passed in this state in the last few years. Instead of trusting women and families to know what is right for their lives, their bodies, their heart and their mind, this bill seeks to enforce regulations that are both medically unnecessary and unduly shaming. When a woman or pregnant person decides to have an abortion, she should be able to access that care safely, in her community, without shame, judgment, or harassment, including from politicians.

Abortion providers like Preterm already handle embryonic and fetal tissue in accordance with state law to ensure that it is safe and appropriately handled. There are laws that regulate medical tissue for healthcare providers and we work in strict accordance with them. We work hand-in-hand with each of our patients to ensure they understand their full scope of options and that the option they choose meets their emotional and spiritual needs.

In our expert opinions, we believe SB 27 will harm women and families in Ohio. It will not result in fewer people needing abortion care, nor will it result in fewer unplanned pregnancies or more support for families—which Ohioans desperately need. SB 27 does not serve any public health benefit, and, because of the way it would be enforced, would instead lead directly to the closure of abortion clinics. The requirements of this bill would impose steep financial burdens on women in Ohio and on nonprofit clinics like Preterm, who already provide significant financial assistance to our patients. Clinics like Preterm provide primary healthcare services including abortion care, birth control and contraceptive options, wellness appointments, testing and treatment for STIs, and many other services.

Last year, residents from each of your districts received abortion care. The women in your district know what is right for their lives, their families, and their bodies. They are mothers, wives, friends, and voters. They are people. And they count on clinics like Preterm for safe, effective care.

It is not anyone's place to judge or decide for anyone what they would or should do, whether or not they should have an abortion, how they should grieve or not, or what is the appropriate way to feel. There is no right or wrong way to feel about an abortion, and we stand with our patients in recognizing that their reproductive decisions and the emotions they feel around them are nuanced, complex, and unique. We stand with our patients and providers in recognizing that they are part of a unique but large community, and that they are the experts on medical care, and the care and processes that are right for their lives and bodies.

Soon, you will get to vote on SB 27. Your vote will decide whether the women and people who use our services every day can come to closure in the way that feels right for them—with the guidance of medical professionals and staff, under the adherence of already strict guidelines—or whether the state of Ohio will force a woman or person who has had an abortion to have to consider and decide upon burial or cremation services—without regard for her religious or faith practices, family situation, support system, or personal circumstances.

The state of Ohio is not a faith advisor, nor a doctor, and they should leave these deeply personal decisions to the people they affect and to the professionals guiding their care.

Sincerely yours,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Chrissy France".

Chrissy France

Executive Director