

**Opponent Testimony on Senate Bill 260**  
**Ohio Senate Health Committee**  
**on behalf of the National Council of Jewish Women**  
**Wednesday, February 26, 2020**  
**Submitted by Janyce Katz, Chair, NCJW Columbus Advocacy Committee**

For over 125 years nationally and 100 years in the Franklin County, NCJW has fought to protect life. As an organization of 90,000 members and supporters across the country and 2,500 members and supporters in Ohio, we are dedicated to improving the quality of life for all women, children and families through community service and advocacy efforts to advance social justice.

We oppose Senate Bill 260 for religious, health and economic reasons. NCJW has actively worked at the state and federal levels to improve health care access, defend reproductive justice and reduce infant and maternal mortality. We have created programs and have supported bills to help prevent babies from being shaken to death or brain damaged. We have created and supported programs to help new mothers. We developed programs to protect women from being sold into slavery or trafficked.

NCJW opposes this bill limiting access to telemedicine for pregnant women who choose to have an abortion and criminalizing physicians who use it to provide abortion care. For many years, telemedicine has been a safe and effective means of providing health care to people in communities that lack health care providers. Limiting this access will put more lives at risk. According to the Turnaway Study, a longitudinal study conducted by the University of California, San Francisco, women denied an abortion who have to carry a pregnancy to term were more likely to experience serious complications at the end of pregnancy, including eclampsia and death. It will also threaten the lives of infants who, as a result of lack of prenatal care in rural areas, may be born prematurely. We oppose this bill because it will increase the state's infant mortality rate and will increase the state's cost to care for many more babies that will be born prematurely as a result of lack of adequate health care during pregnancy.

In our religion, the life of the mother comes before the life of the child to be born, the fetus. In our religion, the Torah lays out certain laws about how to live in the chapter that comes right after the Almighty gives us the Ten Commandments. The chief biblical source referring to abortion is in that Torah portion, Exodus 21:22–25, concerning the man who inadvertently strikes a pregnant woman, causing her to lose the pregnancy. The attacker is not liable for homicide for the death of the fetus, but if the woman dies, the man is liable for her homicide. Clearly, if this is the law of the Almighty to people, it is a law that says the baby carried by a woman is not to be treated as a full person. Until emergence, it is a part of the woman. Oholot 7:6 states that if a woman is having difficulty giving birth, the midwife may dismember the fetus in utero in order to extract it to save the mother's life.

So, we are arguing not only for the right as intelligent human beings to be able to make medical decisions in consultation with our doctors and, perhaps, our loved ones as well, we ask for the freedom to observe our Jewish religion and to adhere to its values. Those values are that it puts the life of the living mother before the life of the fetus she carries. Prior to a late stage in labor the fetus is considered part of the mother.

NCJW is prochoice, prolife and profamily. We strongly believe that a woman's right to reproductive choice is a fundamental element of our religious liberty. Our organization works to protect lives, not to

destroy them. We oppose the rush to regulate women's reproductive health with measures that have no scientific basis and are not supported by the American Medical Association. Without question, such regulations say that women are not capable of making decisions for themselves and doctors, who assist their health care, should be punished.

We oppose this bill because Ohio continues to have one of the highest rates of infant mortality in the country. The leading cause of infant mortality is prematurity and low birth weight which can often be the result of lack of prenatal care early in a pregnancy. If we truly care about children, we should be spending our dollars on preventing those deaths through appropriate access to reproductive health care and prenatal care. The average cost of preterm birth is \$30,000 per baby. And there are 500 neonatal deaths annually. We oppose this effort to limit health care and urge the committee to work on measures that improve access, not deny it.