

Ohio House Criminal Justice Committee

Senate Bill 145 Testimony of Joanne Pickrell

February 13, 2018

Chairman Manning, Ranking Minority Member Celebrezze, and members of the House Criminal Justice Committee, my name is Joanne Pickrell. I am here today to testify in opposition to SB 145 and to inform you of the terrible physical, mental and emotional pain you will cause families if you pass this bill.

For many years, my husband and I struggled to start a family, going through multiple rounds of fertility treatments. Over two years we experienced five miscarriages. Each time there was a different medical and emotional path to recovery.

Our very first round of fertility treatments led to my first pregnancy in 2011. On January 9, 2012, I had a “spontaneous abortion” at 15 weeks while at home. I called the doctor in the middle of the night, but never made it to his office the next morning. I had, painfully, given birth in my bathroom.

I felt the exact moment the baby fell out of my body. All I could think was “don’t look, don’t look.” I remember screaming for my husband and leaving the bathroom. My husband followed the doctor’s instructions of collecting the remains from the toilet and packaging them in a shopping bag. After a sleepless night, he carefully placed the remains in the backseat of our car, and we went to the doctor’s office for an examination. If all of the tissue had not passed naturally, I would have needed a dilation and evacuation to remove the remaining tissue.

That is not something any woman – or her husband – should be forced to experience.

For days, I could not go into that bathroom or be alone on the second floor of my house. Now, I think of what would have happened if my husband had not been home with me that night. I think of the women who are alone when this happens, maybe their partner is at work or away from home or serving in the military. I could never have scooped up a baby – a baby I wanted more than anything in the world – in a shopping bag.

To this day, six years later, my husband and I have never talked about what happened that night. To do so would be to relive the worst night of our lives.

Throughout our journey I had miscarriages during the first trimester and chose dilatation and curettage procedures, when available, over passing a baby’s remains “naturally.” I could not go through the emotional pain again. When I gave birth to my daughter Amelia, at 25 weeks, it was an emergency situation, and the doctor said I

was going to give birth naturally. At that point we did not know if she would survive the delivery. Before it was determined that I needed an emergency C-section, I pulled on the arm of a nurse who was wheeling—running—me to the delivery room and said, “I can not push out another dead baby.”

Doctors have testified that SB 145 will prohibit the ability of doctors to perform dilation and evacuation procedures, *the safest procedure used for spontaneous fetal death in the second trimester*. After experiencing a second trimester miscarriage naturally at home, I think that women who experience a pregnancy loss in the second trimester should have the choice to have a doctor perform a D & E. No woman, no loving spouse, no other children in the house, should have to deal with that trauma.

Fortunately, our story does end on a happy note. My husband and I are the parents of two healthy and energetic young girls. Lilly is four and is an adoption success story. Amelia is three and a micro-premie success story.

Thank you for the opportunity to tell my story and shine a light on what may happen in many homes if women are not given the choice of a dilation and evacuation procedures, especially after the death of the child.