Hello,

My name is Cassimir Svigelj,

22091 River Oaks Dr.

Rocky River, OH 44116

I am here to provide testimony in support of house bill 440.

My testimony is as follows:

Chairman Brinkman, Vice-chair Henne and Members of the Ohio House insurance committee, thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony on House Bill 440.

Ohio is a national leader.

We are in the top 20 in the nation for deaths caused by heart disease, cancer, lower respiratory diseases, stroke, diabetes, kidney disease, flu/pneumonia, septicemia, and overdose deaths. We are also in the top ten nationally in terms of infant mortality.

These grim statistics are even worse for our state’s minority population which is evident when a wealthy African-American woman with an advanced degree is more likely to die from birth complications than a poor white woman without a high-school diploma.

Ohio’s residents die far more frequently than most of our counterparts. I can’t comprehend how this Legislature can claim to be “pro-life” when our citizens life-expectancy is one of the nation’s worst.

We continue to be ranked as one of the least healthiest states in the nation, despite having world class facilities operating in our state. In my home county of Cuyahoga, we have the world-renowned Cleveland Clinic, yet last year we had one of the state’s highest infant mortality rates.

This is the result of unequal access, and today you have the opportunity to end that.

I know for a few of you, my words mean nothing. That life is a privilege and not a right. That the people who were born and raised into poverty, without access to healthy food or nutritious options, are in their current state of poverty because they didn’t work hard enough.

That you worked hard and became successful so why can’t they? That capitalism creates winners and losers, so this is the cost of efficiency.

I’m not blind to your perceptions of me as young and idealistic and I’m aware that this bill will likely never pass in the current session or the next. I am here to join the growing chorus of supporters. I’m here so you can see there are advocates for progress in this state and you won’t be able to stop us forever.

This state has failed its citizens. Extremist political rhetoric and lack of opportunity is why my generation and my younger sibling’s generation have fled Ohio.

I’m asking you to give them a reason to come back. I’m asking you to give those still here a reason to stay.

But most importantly, I’m asking you to fulfill the promise made in our founding declaration:

 That we are endowed with the certain unalienable Right to Life, and for as long as you continue to allow Ohioans to die under your governance, you are failing that founding promise.

Thank you for taking the time to hear us on this important matter,

Cassimir Svigelj