



Sarah Inskeep
Opponent Testimony for Ohio Senate Bill 27
Ohio House Civil Justice Committee
Thursday, December 3, 2020

Chairman Hambley, Vice-Chair Patton, Ranking Member Brown, and members of the House Civil Justice Committee, thank you for allowing me to testify in opposition Senate Bill 27. It would be my preference to deliver this testimony in person, however due to the alarming increase of Coronavirus cases and leadership's continued neglect to implement the minimum of a mask mandate for legislators and their affiliated staff in the Ohio Statehouse, it is simply not safe to come before this committee in person. It is my hope that this committee – and every committee in both the Senate and House – immediately implement a mask mandate for all staff and legislators, in addition to offering virtual testimony in every committee so that the constituents you all represent can safely participate in the legislative process without risking their health during the this lame duck session and beyond.

With that, my name is Sarah Inskeep and I am the Ohio State Policy and Movement Building Director for URGE: Unite for Reproductive and Gender Equity. URGE is a Reproductive Justice organization led by and for young people of color and LGBTQ+ folks in the South and Midwest, which includes our work in Ohio. At URGE, we believe that Reproductive Justice is when people have the economic, social and political power, resources, and agency to make healthy and informed decisions about their bodies, sexuality, and reproduction. It is only then that our people can live, love, create families, and live safely and with dignity in their communities. On behalf of our hundreds of members across Ohio, I urge you to vote no and ultimately stop Senate Bill 27.

It is not surprising that Senate Bill 27 is suddenly moving during this lame duck legislative session after idling in committee for over six months. It wouldn't be a lame duck legislative session in Ohio without extremist politicians prioritizing their misguided, anti-abortion agenda. It is, however, deeply infuriating that members of this legislature are focused on moving an abortion ban when Ohioans and their families are facing urgent health, housing, employment, educational crises that have and continue to be exacerbated by the Coronavirus pandemic.

Senate Bill 27 seeks to require abortion providers to cremate and or bury the medical tissue from a surgical abortion procedure. To be clear – abortion providers just like other health care providers and facilities, contract with medical waste companies in accordance with state law to do this. Additionally, people who have an abortion procedure already have the right to work with clinic staff to cremate or bury medical tissue if they choose to do so. However, if a patient decided that they did not want to cremate or bury medical tissue from their procedure, Senate Bill 27 would force them to sign off on an unnecessary form so that the clinic could comply with



the regulations proposed under this bill and dispose the medical tissue. The state forcing providers to do this to people is not a practice that is rooted in compassion, dignity, or respect.

Abortion remains an essential, common, and safe health care procedure – and it must be treated as such. Senate Bill 27 is not about creating more “choices” for people like the supporters of this bill claim, but rather it is yet another regulatory vehicle to put more barriers in front of people and making abortion services more difficult to access in Ohio. Simply put – this bill is about stigmatizing abortion care, shaming people who make the decision to have an abortion and penalizing the medical professionals who provide that care. Choices are eliminated with pregnant people don’t have real access to abortion care because of abortion regulations such as this.

If Senate Bill 27 wasn’t harmful enough in its original form, earlier this week we learned of a potential amendment (AM_133_3650) that the committee would consider. This amendment would redefine non-therapeutic abortion in the public facilities section of the Ohio Revised Code, prohibiting public hospitals and other facilities from providing abortion care in cases of rape and incest. Additionally, it seeks to ban public hospitals or facilities from affiliating with an individual or organization that provides abortion care services. Meaning, if a medical professional were to work part-time providing abortion care at a clinic, they be prohibited from also teaching at a public institution like the Ohio State University or providing primary care at a public hospital like Ohio Public Health. Do the supporters of this believe that barring victims of rape and incest from being able to receive abortion care in a public facility is providing them with more “choices” or “options”? Is limiting a medical professional from performing the full range of health care services they are licensed to provide to a patient in need “standard practice”? I think not.

Similar legislation to Senate Bill 27 has passed in other states like Texas, Louisiana, and Arkansas and has since been blocked by the courts. The last thing Ohio needs is another abortion ban ending up in the courts and sucking up taxpayer resources during a pandemic when Ohioans and their families are struggling to make ends meet, are getting sick, and have loved ones dying. If the supporters of this legislation truly cared about “life” they would be wearing masks and would make virtual testimony an option for their most vulnerable constituents to share their stories and concerns on bills such as this. But that is not the case. If it were, legislators would be focusing their efforts on moving legislation that will help reduce racial disparities in our healthcare system, ensuring that families have clean, safe, and sustainable communities to live in, and that young people – no matter what zip code they live in – receive a high-quality education because their schools are properly funded.

To conclude, I urge a no vote and ultimately stop Senate Bill 27, and call on this committee to do what’s right by the people they were elected to represent and focus on the real and urgent issues facing people of Ohio.