

Testimony of Chrissy France, Executive Director, Preterm

Senate Health, Human Services, and Medicaid Committee

February 26, 2018

I respectfully write today to voice our organization's opposition to Senate Bill 23, a bill that would effectively outlaw abortion in Ohio before most women know they are pregnant, criminalize the procedure, and could potentially outlaw many kinds of birth control that prevent unwanted pregnancies.

Here at Preterm, we are experts in comprehensive women's reproductive healthcare, providing world-class care for Ohio women for 45 years. I write not only on behalf of myself, but also the people who will be impacted by SB 23 the most: our patients who know what is best for their own lives and their own bodies, our physicians who provide thousands of lifesaving medical procedures every year, and our clinic staff who support our patients and doctors at each and every level to provide the safest and highest quality care.

In our expert opinions, we believe SB 23 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. Instead, SB 23 would ban abortion at a point in pregnancy when most women do not yet realize they are pregnant. It would criminalize doctors for providing safe, effective medical care. And it would force women seeking abortion services back into dangerous, desperate situations, reviving the public health crisis that existed before *Roe v. Wade*.

Our physicians have seen this firsthand in our local hospitals in Cleveland and those around the state of Ohio. When women are desperate, with no options, and their backs are up against the wall, they historically and even currently resort to dangerous and deadly methods of self-induced abortion and seeking care in unsafe settings. We certainly do not want to ever return to the days of the "back-alley" abortion as our country witnessed a tragic and unacceptably high maternal mortality rate. We do not want to see Ohio women suffer or die.

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. Care that includes birth control, contraception, wellness exams, and abortion.

The voices of our patients are the most important for you to hear. The quotes included in this letter were written by patients and their loved ones while in the waiting room at Preterm. Please take their words to heart as you consider how to vote on SB 23.

“I am here today to support my daughter. She is 14 years old and was assaulted. This decision was hers to make. I stand beside her and all women 100%. As a woman that has been in your shoes before I understand the hard decision you had to make. Your body, your choice.”

—A mother, a survivor, a friend

“I'm not going to lie, I'm a nervous wreck waiting here right now. But, this is the best decision for every one involved. It doesn't matter what your reason is for doing this, that's your business. Just remember, you are making the best, although potentially hard choice for you and your future. Women are beautiful, talented, special, and have a purpose.”

—Alana

“I always believed in pro-choice, but not my choice. Until it had to be my choice. Or rather, my daughter’s choice. Because it is her choice. I raised her to be independent and make strong decisions. Today, this is one of her decisions. All I can do is stand with her.”

—Anonymous

“I am 40 years old and my husband of 16 years doesn’t know I’m here. But that’s ok. I am ok with my decision. I feel relieved. It’s my choice and no one else’s. Just remember not to judge others for the things they do. Always stick up for women’s rights or we wouldn’t be able to be here today.”

—Survivor

Soon, you will get to vote on SB 23. Your vote will decide whether the women and people who use our services every day can continue to seek the medical care they know is right for their lives and bodies with the guidance, support, and expertise of trained medical professions, or whether those people will have to seek out abortion services on their own, with only the assistance of the internet.

Sincerely yours,

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

Chrise France

Executive Director