



**Testimony of Stephanie Craddock Sherwood,  
Executive Director of Women Have Options - Ohio,  
Senate Health, Human Services and Medicaid Committee  
Senate Bill 27  
March 25, 2019**

Chairman Burke, Ranking Member Antonio, and members of the Senate Health, Human Services and Medicaid Committee, thank you for the opportunity to testify in opposition to Senate Bill 27. My name is Stephanie Craddock Sherwood and I am the Executive Director of Women Have Options - Ohio, we are Ohio's abortion fund. I am here to testify on behalf of the tens of thousands of women and those seeking abortion care whose reproductive health care we have helped pay for and to share how devastating this bill will be for pregnant folks in Ohio.

In the several times I've spoken to this committee I have shared stories about the challenges those we serve go through to access the abortion care they need. I have shared about the barriers this body has placed in front of them and how, despite your best efforts and with our help, they have overcome these barriers and still gotten the health care that is their right. I'm not really here to tell you anything different today.

You know the impact of this bill. This bill is a thinly veiled attempt to make abortion less accessible by making it more expensive and more stigmatized. And I'm against this underhanded attempt to close clinics and shame women seeking abortions. Burying or cremating fetal remains bears no scientifically demonstrated public health purpose, places unnecessary burdens on health-care providers and patients alike, and aims to restrict abortion access by any means possible.

This is a subtle manipulation, to allege that women don't think hard enough about what abortion entails (which is untrue), and to trick the public into believing that they're burying a child. It's state-mandated mental torture that achieves no good but just pain. It's cruelty defined. Mark Harrington of the clinic protest group Created Equal said to NPR - "It goes without saying, if she's given the option to cremate or bury she's going to maybe wonder that this isn't just some kind of blob of tissue," "and she may choose not to abort".

The thing is, patients are already given this option after their procedure. Those very few who choose it do it for spiritually significant reasons and/or closure. This requirement will only act to (at a minimum) dramatically increase the costs for the procedure at the patient's expense and (at worst) close clinics unable to comply with this new law. The rule creates ambiguity and involves other licensed professionals, like funeral service directors and cemeteries that are not involved in medical care, shouldn't be involved, and don't want to be involved. If these private businesses decided to work with abortion providers, they would be subject to the very same protesters we see harassing Ohio's patients and abortion providers. If clinics can't find a funeral home willing to be harrassed, they can't stay open.

Anti-choice laws, like this remains requirement, are a threat on all women and those seeking abortion care, in part because they exploit vulnerability, and give anti-abortion advocates talking points. Any responsible legislation around abortion must maintain its availability as the safe, legal, and normal healthcare procedure it is. Doing so means taking into account that not all people have the resources to care for a child, or may not wish to be a parent, or may encounter any range of life situations that lead them to seek an abortion. And their ability to do so without shame, misinformation, or stipulation is a social good.

Many of those most likely to be impacted by this bill are already facing challenging circumstances. Targeting abortion access is particularly harmful, especially for those who need it most. We do this work because we believe that people should be able to access abortion no matter their race, socioeconomic status, age, gender identity, or where they live. On behalf of these Ohioans, I urge the committee to vote against this bill.