



**McCray Powell Opponent Testimony for Senate Bill 260 Ohio
Senate Health, Human Services, and Medicaid Committee
Wednesday, February 26, 2020**

Chairman Burke, Vice-Chair Huffman, Ranking Member Antonio, and members of the Senate Health, Human Services, and Medicaid Committee thank you for allowing me to testify in opposition to Senate Bill 260.

My name is McCray Powell. I am an organizer with River Valley Organizing Project and most of my work in this organization takes place in Athens county. The project I'm most proud to be apart of is our drug war survivors union called UnHarming Ohio, which is comprised of leaders with lived and shared experience committed to restorative and transformative solutions for public health and justice that DEFY the isolation of incarceration, the impacts of racialized drug policies, and violent policing; empowering and strengthening the health, safety and morale for all. We organize primarily in small towns, small cities, and rural areas. The passage of Senate Bill 260 would be explicitly harmful to folks in disenfranchised rural communities like mine who would need access to abortion services.

I grew up in Carbon Hill, Ohio. A small town just barely over the Hocking county line. If you count the surrounding area we might have around 200 people living there. I currently live in Nelsonville, about a ten-minute scenic drive from where I grew up. Nelsonville barely has over 5000 residents and I'm very happy to be one of them. Nelsonville is one of the poorest cities in Athens county, the poorest county in Ohio. We are not only some of the most impoverished people in the state but some of the most impoverished in this nation. But I count ourselves very lucky because we have a Planned Parenthood -even if it is all the way at the end of East State Street in Athens. This can be a very long drive for folks that might not have transportation. Especially for poor and rural folks who have a hard enough time getting

their reproductive health care they need. I've spent a lot of time raising funds and organizing transportation for both men and women to get access to the healthcare they need. It's a struggle that we have to take on together as a community because we know damn well all too often the state is working against us. This bill is just another example of that. Prohibiting the use of telemedicine services would make receiving abortion care for folks who are already suffering from poverty that I doubt a lot of folks in this room could understand. We don't have public transportation like folks do here in Columbus, we are far more likely to be uninsured than folks in the city. Telemedicine is a wonderful innovation to deliver necessary medical advice, medication, and additional services to the people in regions like mine.

Because of my work with the UnHarming Ohio union and my involvement with our local community dinner, I'm constantly working with other vulnerable people who have faced similar poverty as myself. I can't tell you how it feels when a young woman without a car or enough pay from her job to feed a new baby tells you how scared she is about her pregnancy. Finding transportation can seem like an impossible task that can take weeks. Weeks these women spend terrified. The state's passing of restrictive abortion legislation doesn't help these women find a ride and it only creates more hurdles for them. If the decision is made to continue this trend of cruel legislation more and more families will be locked into a cycle of inescapable poverty by forcing women into pregnancies they can not afford. Rural and Appalachian folks are tired of having so much stripped from us. We've already had our resources stolen and our bodies broken by the mines and factories that left with their profits, leaving behind so much poverty and despair. The state taking away our right to our own bodies will not be tolerated. Don't take this away from us too.

I ask you to vote no on Senate Bill 260. Young people, rural communities, folks in Ohio already under the incredible weight of poverty would be the ones most impacted and harmed by this legislation.

Thank you again for allowing me to testify and I'm happy to take any questions the committee may have.