



Jordyn Close
Proponent Testimony for Senate Concurrent Resolution 14
Ohio House Insurance Committee
Wednesday, June 9, 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 support of Senate Concurrent Resolution 14.

My name is Jordyn Close and I am the Ohio State Coordinator with URGE: Unite for Reproductive and Gender Equity. URGE is a reproductive justice organization powered by and for young queer and trans people of color in the South and Midwest. At URGE, we work to protect and expand the human right to maintain personal bodily autonomy, have children, not have children, and parent the children folks have in safe and sustainable communities.

Every day in Ohio and in this country Black women, Black men, Black youth, Black children, and Black trans and nonbinary people experience state-sanctioned oppression and violence. Whether it is targeted killing of Black folks by the police or the numerous abortion bans pending in this legislature that disproportionately harm Black women and people of color - the extremist majority in this Statehouse has made it clear that their individual well-being and party politics are more important than the Black lives in their districts and through our the state. Enough is enough. Ohio politicians act by passing bold policies to ensure Black people in this state and across this country are liberated from the harm and violence of structural racism. Senate Concurrent Resolution 14 is a critical first step in this process.

On Thursday, May 28, 2020, hundreds of people protested peacefully and beautifully in downtown Columbus, Ohio in the name of George Floyd, Breonna Taylor, Ahmaud Arbery, Tony McDade, and countless other Black and brown people that are terrorized, brutalized, and murdered at the hands of the racist police.

I made the decision to protest with my community because for far too long Black voices have been silenced by white supremacy and the racist culture that we live in. Seeing people that I know and love being brutalized by police is harrowing and exhausting. Seeing Black and brown people across the country be routinely targeted just for having dark skin is something that I cannot and will not stand on the sidelines for.



I was supporting a community organized protest at Livingston and Lockbourne, peacefully protesting. When that protest dissipated at around 8:00 p.m., myself and other comrades went downtown to support the efforts happening there.

I was on the front lines of the High & Broad protest for about an hour. After about 45 minutes had passed, the Columbus Police Department (CPD) started putting on riot gear and gas masks while the crowd continued to be nothing but peaceful.

Police officer #2304 grabbed my arm repeatedly for trying to record and stream how the police were the ones escalating this peaceful demonstration toward violence.

A few minutes later, the police started tear-gassing the front lines of the crowd for the first of what turned into multiple times that night. I was one of the first hit with the tear gas but was luckily given some protection from my mask and glasses.

After I was gassed the first time, officer #2304 knocked my phone out of my hand. When I walked forward and bent down to pick it up, I was sprayed directly in the face at point-blank range. One of the police officers stomped on and broke my glasses when I tried to reach for them, barely missing my hand and arm.

After being blinded by the pepper spray, I was grabbed by my hair and the back of my shirt and thrown to the ground behind the police bike line, then thrown into the bikes and kicked in the side. I am so lucky that my friends and allies were able to find me and help me get to safety and the street medics. Unfortunately, this is not the case for countless other Black people in this country.

Throughout the rest of the night, CPD used flash bangs, pepper spray, wooden and rubber bullets, concussion grenades, and extreme and brutal force to incite a riot. They blocked off part of the city so peaceful protestors had no way to escape.

Despite this, our comrades and allies continued to hold the line. Some people being tear-gassed multiple times without giving up and without giving in to state-sanctioned violence.

The news has painted this as a riot. That is not what has been occurring in Columbus.

This was about a Black man and countless other Black comrades who have been murdered by police. You will see protestors breaking windows, breaking into the statehouse, and



destroying property and you must remember that this was about human life. The human life that extremists majority in this statehouse claim to care so much about.

What happened to me and many others last night was deeply entrenched, systemic racism against Black people. This racism shows up in many sinister ways like Ohio being one of the worst states for Black infant and maternal mortality¹. Columbus, Ohio also ranks number one in the percentage of the police murders of Black people². Connecting the lines between these disparities is why Reproductive Justice is so important. Reproductive oppression, abortion stigma, and Black maternal death are all symptoms of the same disease: racism.

SisterSong defined Reproductive Justice as the human right to maintain personal bodily autonomy, have children, not have children and parent the children we have in safe and sustainable communities³. Reproductive Justice is the framework that we all need to be doing this work within. When we are not, Black and brown people are left behind and cannot thrive in this white supremacist society. None are free until we are all free.

I cannot express how moving these protests were and continue to be. The community has and continues to show up and show out to say that enough is enough.

I urge this legislative body to put humanity over property, truth over power, and justice over peace and vote yes on Senate Concurrent Resolution 14.

Thank you again for allowing me to testify and I can answer any questions you may have.

¹ Half of Ohio Pregnancy-Related Deaths Preventable, Report Shows. Dayton Daily News. Published Nov. 20, 2019. Accessed June 8, 2020.
<https://www.daytondailynews.com/news/local/half-ohio-pregnancy-related-deaths-preventable-report-shows/H6lmOmNoil8uf4vPrfPWBP/>

² Columbus is Number One! (In Police Killing Black People). Columbus Free Press. Published May 4, 2020. Accessed June 8, 2020.

<https://columbusfreepress.com/article/columbus-number-one-police-killing-black-people>

³ What Is Reproductive Justice? SisterSong. Accessed June 8, 2020.

<https://www.sistersong.net/reproductive-justice#:~:text=SisterSong%20defines%20Reproductive%20Justice%20as,in%20safe%20and%20sustainable%20communities.>