

To Whom it May Concern:

My name is Sarah Smith and I am writing to you all today in support of house bill 285. I do not work in health care, but last year, my sister, Tristin Kate Smith took her own life at the age of 28. Behind, she left a letter titled "A Letter To My Abuser", and because of my sister's letter I have had the opportunity to speak to countless healthcare workers and hear their stories.

I asked 435 healthcare workers a simple question: are you able to provide proper care to patients in the current healthcare system? They were asked to rate their answer on a scale of strongly disagree to strongly agree with the middle being a sometimes option because it's a very situational entity. Just 16% said that they agree or strongly agree and 29% said sometimes. So that's 55% of people telling you they're not able to give you the care you need.

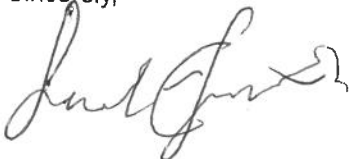
In addition, the ONA code red study found that 91% of nurses support legislation such as HB285. Do you understand how difficult it is to get that many people to agree on something? There is a problem and they are telling you how to help fix it. It benefits not only those providing care but to the patients as well. It's just simple logic and yet, you will likely read testimony that mentions the financial burden and how regulations such as these limit innovation.

I agree. It will limit innovation, but not how you think. It will limit the ability of hospitals to use as few people as possible in as many roles as possible. As far as the financial burden, according to the Ohio hospital association website, 166 hospitals in Ohio are considered non-profit, yet it seems as if they are acting as for profit businesses. For example, the CEO of the hospital my sister worked at had a base salary of 1.6 million with over 400k in bonuses while my sister was only able to eat her sandwich while sitting on the toilet. Oh, and because she wasn't paid enough to cover the cost of living she worked at a bar on the weekends.

I may not work in healthcare, but I am writing today on behalf of those who can longer speak for themselves, like my sister, but also for those who are too scared too. Healthcare is an inherently difficult field, but that doesn't mean the system should make it harder. House bill 285 is just the start, but it's a good start. It's time for us to start caring about those that care about us and stop letting the system exploit their caring nature.

Ohio has an opportunity to become a leader in healthcare reform. There is a reason why nearly a third of healthcare workers admit to having thoughts of hurting themselves. There is a reason that 98% of the people I have spoken to believe there needs to be better mental health resources for healthcare professionals. There is a reason half of healthcare workers I spoke to don't seek private therapy but 2/3 of them would IF there were protections in place to prevent their employer from using it against them. And you know what, shame on us for letting it get this far. What's happening is not okay and the time has come to start making it right.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Sarah E. Smith". The signature is fluid and cursive, written over a light blue horizontal line.

Sarah E. Smith