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State Representative

Across the country, we are seeing women die due to ambiguous laws regulating women's health care. There is no place where it is more confusing than in Ohio with dozens of laws in place that contradict the constitutional amendment that voters passed last year. I want to take a moment to read this for everyone, because it is really quite simple and HB 343, the Reproductive Care Act, aims to make sure our laws represent what people voted for.

The Ohio Constitution now says:

Every individual has a right to make and carry out one's own reproductive decisions, including but not limited to decisions on: 1. contraception; 2. fertility treatment; 3. continuing one's own pregnancy; 4. miscarriage care; and 5. abortion.

The State shall not, directly or indirectly, burden, penalize, prohibit, interfere with, or discriminate against either: 1. An individual's voluntary exercise of this right or 2. A person or entity that assists an individual exercising this right, unless the State demonstrates that it is using the least restrictive means to advance the individual's health in accordance with widely accepted and evidence-based standards of care.

However, abortion may be prohibited after fetal viability. But in no case may such an abortion be prohibited if in the professional judgment of the pregnant patient's treating physician it is necessary to protect the pregnant patient's life or health.

"Fetal viability" means "the point in a pregnancy when, in the professional judgment of the pregnant patient's treating physician, the fetus has a significant likelihood of survival outside the uterus with reasonable measures. This is determined on a case-by-case basis." "State" includes any governmental entity and any political subdivision.

There are dozens of laws on our books imposed strictly to prevent women from getting necessary abortions. There are laws that delay care, create arbitrary barriers, and even one that requires doctors to provide false information to patients. In Ohio, we still have a 6-week abortion ban that is law. There is no place on earth where 20 weeks would be considered viable much less 6 weeks. Judges have ruled that this law violates the Ohio Constitution. However, our Attorney General has indicated that he will fight this ruling. Just yesterday there was an Ohio Capital Journal article about all the different laws currently being argued in various courts in our state. How much time and money must be used at tax-payer expense to fight against their will? In the meantime, doctors and women across the country are confused and don't know which laws are in effect. I could give you specific examples of pregnancy complications that could occur, but I am

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sure most of you have read about them in the news. I am confident if you or your family member were in an emergency situation, the last person you would want doctors to have to call in the middle of the night is the health system legal team to decide what to do. While we fight battles in court, women suffer.

I know this is difficult. Pregnancy is complicated and care is nuanced. It is hard to make life-altering decisions when people hold such conflicting values. Each situation is different and there is no one answer that is the 'correct' decision for every circumstance. But that is the point. We, the legislature, should not be making choices for all women in the state. The people of Ohio have said they want these decisions for themselves. This bill recognizes Ohioan's right to be free from government interference in their reproduction and to control the use of their bodies. I hope you will consider this and support the Reproductive Care Act.