

Good afternoon, Chair Click, Vice Chair Mullins, Ranking Member Brewer, and members of the Ohio House Community Revitalization Committee.

Thank you for accepting my testimony in strong opposition to House Bill 262. My name is Danielle Firsich, and I am the Director of Public Policy for Planned Parenthood Advocates of Ohio and Planned Parenthood of Greater Ohio. HB262 and its designation of “Natural Family Month” is a blatant insult to non-traditional, unmarried, single parent, or LGBTQ+ families, purposely excluding their experience and their validity in forming and growing a loving, healthy, stable family.

Per the Natural Family Strong Foundation’s website, this legislation is inspired by the following proclamation:

“Whereas the Natural Family has long been recognized as an institution that consists of two married individuals of the opposite biological sex and their biological and/or adopted children; Whereas for centuries the natural family has been the mainstay and foundation of Western and other civil societies; Whereas in recent decades this uniquely designed institution has been maligned and denigrated and there have even been attempts to redefine it; and Whereas it is vital to the health of this community to support, celebrate, promulgate, and honor this sacred institution.”¹

What could you possibly ascertain from this absurd manifesto, but the following assumptions: 1) unmarried couples with children, single parents, and families with LGBTQ+ parents are both unnatural in their composition and a degradation to the institution of heterosexual marriage; 2) unmarried or LGBTQ+ couples are somehow responsible for the current heterosexual divorce rate, birth rate, and/or any other societal ills or failures befalling a community they are not even part of; and 3) we must denigrate and exclude entire legitimate families and family systems in order to soothe the imagined anxieties and insecurities of the close-minded few. Putting down entire groups of people and families does nothing to support loving couples in creating safe and thriving families and communities. This legislation is a dangerous and dehumanizing affront to the strength and diversity of Ohio families.

This legislature is well aware that a National Family Month *already exists*, and that it is purposefully inclusive of *all* families, emphasizing that “two working parents, single parents, families of mixed ethnic or racial backgrounds, and same-sex parents all face different challenges in raising their children,” and National Family Month is “meant to both celebrate the strength of families and offer ideas to support the challenges they face.”² By creating a competing Natural Family Month that purposefully excludes certain family

structures, this legislature has chosen--unnecessarily and cruelly--to spit in the face of approximately 557,000 Ohioans who identify as LGBTQ+ and over 490,000 single-parent households that make up 37.5% of all families with children under 18 in Ohio.³ In Ohio, approximately 42.6% of children are born to unmarried parents and more than one-third of children live with one parent.⁴ Why has this legislature chosen to insult and degrade the family composition of a third of our children and nearly half of all parent structures in this state?

The sponsors of this ill-advised legislation bemoaned the state of American marriage and birth rates in their testimony before this committee. How does designating a “Natural Family Month” solve a single issue facing struggling Ohio families at this critical moment? If this body truly wanted to encourage healthy families, parents and babies, you would have kept the child tax credit in the current budget, allocated appropriate funding to our statewide children’s and social services programs, faithfully addressed our abhorrent maternal and infant mortality rates, and meaningfully tackled the vast economic anxieties plaguing our state rather than prioritizing tax benefits, cuts and credits to the wealthiest among us. And you certainly wouldn’t have advocated for trigger language that removes 770,000 Ohioans from the Medicaid expansion, obliterating the health care system that supports nearly half of all births in the United States.

This body is hypocritically taking a pronatalist stance while simultaneously supporting drastic reductions to social services and public health funding that are vital to both population health and expansion. It is unsurprising that when asked if or when they prioritize having children, most individuals say that they first require “stable housing, job security, health care, education and a good partner.”⁵ This bill does not do a single thing to address these primary concerns. And if this legislature is so concerned with the falling U.S. birth and fertility rate, where was a single Republican representative when a bill was introduced during the previous general assembly to protect and expand access to IVF and assisted reproductive technology (ART)? This is not a serious body, and fittingly, this is not a serious piece of legislation. This is a useless proclamation of ill-advised and exclusionary priorities rather than the sweeping policy changes necessary to support the foundation of healthy, thriving families in our state.

The fact that this legislature is once again choosing to push a blatantly anti-LGBTQ+ bill during Pride Month does not go unnoticed, particularly in a state with the 6th largest LGBTQ+ population in the nation.⁶ And we should find grave concern with the fact that an obsession with pronatalism creates an alarming parallel to the modern eugenics movement that emphasized selective and “natural” hierarchies of gender and race, leading to disgraceful arguments like the “great replacement theory,” bolstered by racial

pseudoscience. This is a politic of fear and projection rather than a politic of thoughtful solutions, and Ohioans deserve far better from their elected leaders.

Finally, as an individual whose family is being explicitly dehumanized and erased through this legislation, let me say the following: there is nothing I am prouder of in this world than my family. My family that consists of myself and my same sex partner, my adopted eldest child, and the three children my partner gave birth to and raised as a single parent for much of their childhood. There will never be a day when I apologize for stepping in and stepping up to be a supportive, loving, nurturing, encouraging, and compassionate parent to these four children. And there will never be a day when I allow my children to feel that our family is unnatural, lesser than, or fit to be a scapegoat for the challenges facing certain family structures that we both do not participate in nor have remote responsibility for.

I strongly encourage this committee to vote no on House Bill 262. It is an insult to Ohioans, Ohio families, and the welcoming and supportive environment we should be dedicated to providing to all who seek to live, work, and thrive in this state.

Thank you for your time and attention, and I will now take any questions you may have.

¹ <https://naturalfamilystrong.com/nfm-resolution>

² <https://talkitover.org/national-family-month/>

³ https://dam.assets.ohio.gov/image/upload/development.ohio.gov/research/Final_Snapsh ot_Ohio_Population_2023.pdf

⁴ <https://www.cincinnati.com/story/news/education/2024/01/01/ohio-teaches-that-children-born-to-unmarried-parents-are-worse-off/71881111007/>

⁵ <https://www.npr.org/2025/04/25/nx-s1-5371718/pronatalist-birth-rate-musk-natal-conference>

⁶ <https://www.wtrf.com/ohio/ohio-bill-to-celebrate-natural-family-month-excludes-lgbtq-single-parents/>