

Testimony on House Bill 172
House Health Committee
Cora Lawrence
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Chair Schmidt, Vice Chair Deeter, Ranking Member Somani, and members of the House Health Committee, thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony on House Bill 172.

My name is Cora Lawrence and I am a 3rd year criminology student at Ohio State University. I am also a victim advocate at The Domestic Violence Shelter in Richland County. House bill 172 poses a serious risk to minors, especially those whose consent givers are the people harming them. This was the case with me, hence why I am speaking to you all today. Living with my single mother, I was abused by her throughout my childhood and teenage years. She was dismissive of how I was feeling; and I was constantly told my feelings were invalid. Luckily, I had a father who listened to me, believed me, and wanted to help me. What about the children and teens out there without that support system? Who will they turn to? Professional support may be the only safe place these children have. This legislation would remove a critical lifeline, forcing children to keep quiet in environments that may already be unsafe, and preventing help may cause lifelong psychological harm.

Limiting minors' access to these services undermines the purpose of such services: to provide safety, support and guidance. This bill assumes that all parents act with their children's best interest in mind, which is not always the case. My own experience demonstrates how a parent can deny a child necessary resources. This bill could harm children who are living in neglectful, abusive, and unsupportive households. If I were allowed the opportunity to receive help sooner, a lifetime of stress, resentment, and psychological issues could have been prevented. Please help the children of Ohio and reconsider the impacts of House Bill 172.