

Opponent Testimony for House Bill 410

The House Medicaid Committee

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Maya Dunson, Medical Student

Chair Jennifer Gross, Vice Chair Tim Barhorst, Ranking Member Rachel B. Baker, and the rest of the House Committee members, thank you for the opportunity to testify today in strong opposition to House Bill 410.

My name is Maya Dunson. I am an Ohio native and a current medical student at the Ohio State University College of Medicine. I am also actively involved in advocacy for reproductive justice as Vice President of Medical Students for Choice – Ohio State Chapter and a committee member of the AMA-MSS Committee on Gender and Sexual Health. Finally, I am a major advocate for marginalized communities and populations through Students for a National Health Program - OSU Chapter and Student National Medical Association - OSU Chapter.

As a medical student and through my public health education, I understand the importance of access to care for all aspects of human health, and how barriers to care - including legislation and economic barriers - can negatively affect access, which can lead to worsening health outcomes for our communities. I have especially researched and seen this within women's and reproductive health for disadvantaged populations, and it is my goal to pursue OB/GYN as a women's health advocate to reduce barriers to care and disparities.

I also understand that within reproductive care, there is an importance to protect and ensure access to abortions, miscarriage management, contraception, and other services to all Ohio residents. This is why I am here to strongly oppose House Bill 410, as it will directly create barriers to this reproductive care by banning funding to abortion providers in our state.

Firstly, many clinics that offer abortion services, including Planned Parenthood, Equity Clinic, and CHOICES Women's Medical center, also offer reproductive care and comprehensive women's healthcare, including preventative services like vaccines and cancer screening, contraception, miscarriage management, yearly examinations, and family planning. Eliminating a major funding source like Medicaid would severely reduce the vital services that these clinics provide. It could also possibly lead to job losses and

clinic closures, as clinics like Planned Parenthood rely on this funding – with over 43% of their funding coming from Medicaid services, which is 22,000 of 50,550 patients.

Without reimbursement for these services, patients would lose access to essential women’s healthcare, leading to barriers in care and increased morbidity and mortality, particularly among marginalized populations. This will affect all people, including those who are pregnant or wish to become pregnant, and will be especially harmful to those already facing barriers to care.

Secondly, I have deep concerns about this bill’s attack on the equity of reproductive care, especially towards minority and disadvantaged communities. In 2023, it was found that 71.5% of African American residents, 54.9% of Hispanic residents, and 32.7% of Asian/Pacific Islander residents were covered by Medicaid, compared to only 31.9% of white patients. These statistics show that HB 410 will disproportionately affect minority communities, limiting their access to reproductive healthcare and exacerbating existing inequities.

Thirdly, I want to emphasize a critical point: back in 2023, 57% of Ohio voters made the decision to pass “*The Right to Reproductive Freedom with Protections for Health and Safety*” also known as Issue 1. This measure protects reproductive rights for all persons, including access to contraception, fertility treatment, miscarriage management, and abortion up to the point of viability, as well as one’s right to make their own decisions regarding reproductive healthcare. It also states that the law cannot, directly or indirectly, burden, penalize, prohibit, interfere with, or discriminate against this care, unless the State can prove that it is using the least restrictive means, as analyzed by the Ohio Attorney General.

With these facts to consider, HB 410 directly opposes the will of Ohio voters by placing barriers and restrictions to care that can hinder individuals’ rights to make decisions about their bodies. Under HB 410, patients who use Medicaid will have a severely restricted network of providers who will be able to provide reproductive services, including abortion. So, in practice, this would effectively eliminate abortion access across the state, a clear violation of the constitutional protections Ohioans voted to enshrine.

This restriction would especially impact marginalized and rural communities, as well as people experiencing financial hardship, by cutting access to services that are legally protected. It would also endanger patients who are experiencing miscarriage. Abortion drugs, like mifepristone, are recommended by the American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists and World Health Organization to prevent unnecessary medical procedures and reduce the risk of infection and hemorrhage risk from incomplete uterine evacuation.

Patients would be denied or delayed access to this care, as providers may hesitate to provide care or may not be able to, which would lead to higher risk of morbidity and mortality.

Lastly, research shows that when women lack access to abortion care and miscarriage management, rates of maternal morbidity and mortality increase, regardless of race or ethnicity. Restricting abortion access does not stop people from seeking abortions, it just drives them to find unsafe alternatives. This leads to higher rates of complications and deaths, as well as a worsening mental health for populations, with studies showing that abortion restricted states experience higher levels of stress and anxiety for their residents.

As a medical student, a woman, and a future healthcare provider, I view this bill a direct threat to my rights and the rights of my future patients and fellow Ohioans. Moreover, it contradicts the will of Ohio voters, who have already affirmed reproductive freedom as a constitutional right.

I urge you to consider my testimony and reject House Bill 410.

Thank you for your attention.

Maya Dunson