



**Stephanie Ranade Krider**  
**House Bill 135**  
**House Community & Family Advancement Committee**  
**May 19, 2015**

Chairman Derickson, Vice Chairman Ginter, Ranking Member Howse, and members of the committee, thank you for allowing me to testify today in favor of House Bill 135. My name is Stephanie Ranade Krider and I am the Executive Director of Ohio Right to Life. On behalf of Ohio Right to Life and our statewide membership and affiliates, I am here today to speak in support of this legislation.

This legislation very simply would prohibit an abortion from being performed on an unborn child on the basis of that child having Down syndrome. A study published by the National Center for Biotechnology Information and featured in the New York Times found that approximately 92% of unborn children diagnosed with Down syndrome are aborted. While elective abortion is never the right choice, it's particularly egregious that unborn children can be denied life simply due to the presence of a disability or an extra chromosome.

According to the CDC, roughly 1 in every 700 children in the U.S. is born with Down syndrome annually, making it the most common chromosomal disorder. Down syndrome is not considered a severe disability. Many persons with Down syndrome are able to obtain an education, maintain employment, and live with varying degrees of independence. As medical and technological advances are made, these citizens will become increasingly independent and productive citizens – changes that have already been seen in our lifetime. As Rep. LaTourette stated in her sponsor

testimony, the life expectancy of a person with Down syndrome has increased dramatically from 25 years in 1983 to over 60 years today.

Recently we have seen an increase in the use of prenatal screenings and invasive testing to diagnose potential health problems in unborn children. Amniocentesis and other prenatal testing often give correct results, but also give many false-positive results. There is evidence that with the increased prevalence of screening tests, the incidence of abortion has increased among women who have received a test result indicating a disability in their unborn child **without undergoing diagnostic testing at all**. *The Boston Globe* ran an expose on this and other disturbing trends in prenatal testing in December, telling the stories of multiple mothers who had been given a false positive result for one or more disabilities in their unborn baby.<sup>1</sup>

Even when the correct diagnostic tests have been performed and have confirmed a diagnosis, to abort in these circumstances is nothing less than the modern day practice of eugenics. The idea of “weeding out the unfit” to “improve the human population” popularized by Margaret Sanger among others in the early 1900s, is alive and well today, and we seem to be unwilling to admit it. Abortions resulting from tests like these, which identify Down syndrome among many other disabilities, are discriminatory. It is that simple. How contradictory in a time where our culture so highly values diversity and works so hard to promote acceptance of the marginalized members of our communities.

In many circumstances, the United States prohibits discrimination against persons with Down syndrome, and the Americans with Disabilities Act –signed into law 25 years ago – creates certain protections for Americans with disabilities like Down syndrome. Last year, this very body passed legislation (House Bill 552) which will provide expectant mothers and families with better information about the resources available to them, as well as facilitate connections to the many existing organizations whose mission it is to assist families of children with Down

---

<sup>1</sup> Daley, Beth. (2014, December 14) Oversold Prenatal Test Spur Some to Choose Abortions. *The Boston Globe*. Retrieved from [www.bostonglobe.com](http://www.bostonglobe.com)

syndrome. We all celebrated the recent story of a high school quarterback taking his friend with Down syndrome to prom as an example of an upstanding young man. How is it that we are so willing to make such accommodations and to celebrate with the disabled among us, yet we so easily accept the arguments to end their lives before they begin? It is the worst form of discrimination to violently rob them of their opportunity to live.

People with Down syndrome have the same fundamental rights as all other human beings. They are as valuable to our society as you or I. As you consider this legislation, consider our brothers and sisters with disabilities who live among us, and think of the message we send by standing by while others like them are devalued in our society through abortion.

Chairman Derickson, Vice Chair Ginter, Ranking Member Howse and members of the Community and Family Advancement committee, thank you again for the opportunity to testify on HB 135. I am happy to answer any questions you may have.



Policy Position on Infant Mortality  
September 2014

According to the [Centers for Disease Control](#), Ohio has the fifth highest infant mortality rate in the country (7.88 deaths per 1,000 live births), and the highest infant mortality rate for African Americans (15.45 deaths per 1,000 live births as compared to 6.39 deaths per live births among whites). Ohio's infant mortality rate has remained stagnant for over a decade while the U.S. infant mortality rate experienced a twelve percent decline from 2005 through 2011.

It is the mission of Ohio Right to Life to advance the right to life, working to see every child reach their birth day. Because Ohio's public policy prefers pregnancy to result in childbirth (O.R.C. 9.041), the state is promoting initiatives that support healthy pregnancies.

It is the policy of Ohio Right to Life to ensure the right to life for every child, promoting their health and opposing their destruction from the moment of conception. Ohio Right to Life is positioned to respond to infant mortality by taking the following actions:

- Advocating on behalf of families and their children by advancing legislation to decrease infant mortality.
- Promoting and supporting organizations and groups that promote and ensure healthy pregnancies.
- Providing educational resources to Ohio communities on the issue of infant mortality. These resources will reduce Ohio's vulnerability to this tragedy and raise awareness for those impacted by it.