



**Testimony of Jaime Miracle,
Deputy Director for NARAL Pro-Choice Ohio,
to the House Committee on Community and Family Advancement
Opposing House Bill 135
June 2, 2015**

Chairman Derickson, Vice Chairman Ginter, Ranking Member Howse and members of the Ohio House Community and Family Advancement Committee, my name is Jaime Miracle. I am the Deputy Director for NARAL Pro-Choice Ohio. I am here to speak in opposition to HB 135 on behalf of our more than 20,000 activists and members in Ohio.

During sponsor testimony on this legislation Representative Sarah LaTourette said that this bill was not about abortion. I respect the convictions of the sponsor of this bill, but must unequivocally disagree. If this bill is not about abortion, why is its sole purpose banning abortion services to a specific group of women in our state? This bill is just like the other two abortion bans assigned to this committee, an unconstitutional attempt to limit access to a health care procedure.

This time instead of banning abortion at 6 weeks or 20 weeks, this committee is hearing a bill that will ban abortion based on a certain medical diagnosis. This bill is not about helping individuals living with a disability or the families that love and support them, it is about banning access to abortion care.

When a woman and her family faces a complicated medical diagnosis during pregnancy there are a million things that go through her head. Some of the questions she will try to answer include:

- Can I raise a child with disabilities?
- Do I have access to health care?
- Are there services for people with disabilities in my community?
- Can I take the time off work needed to take care of my child?
- Do I have maternity leave so that my child and I can figure out this complicated diagnosis?
- Do I have access to specialists to help the child develop and medical professionals to treat possible medical complications?
- Does my school system have adequate programs in place to educate my child so that they can grow to their full potential?
- Do I have the support system I need to navigate this new world?

If this bill really was about helping people facing a complicated medical diagnosis during pregnancy these are the issues that this bill would address. Putting the government between a woman and her doctor when making a decision to continue a pregnancy is not how we support families raising children with developmental disabilities. Telling women that the government knows what is best for her and her family is not what this committee and this legislature should be prioritizing.

In fact, as we debate this bill, the budget passed by this Ohio House slashes funding for programs that serve people with developmental disabilities, the House passed budget even significantly cuts Medicaid funding for this population. County developmental disability boards have been significantly impacted by the loss of Tangible Personal Property Tax reimbursement from the state, and the loss of this money means that these boards lose federal funding opportunities as well. Less money means less services in these communities.

Funding for special education programs also falls short of what is needed in this state. According to the Ohio Coalition for the Education of Children with Disabilities, special education funding fell \$210 million dollars short of what was needed last year¹. Advocates are currently suing the state of Ohio because underfunding of our school systems in general has left districts without sufficient resources to provide the proper level of education for special needs students in their districts².

Will this woman have access to maternity leave and/or paid sick leave to help her bond with her child and help her continue to earn a wage if she has to take time off to help take care of her child? Looking at the statistics, the answer is probably not. In the US, only 13% of workers have paid family leave. When you break that down by wage, only 4% of low-wage workers have paid family leave³. Only 59% of workers have access to unpaid family leave, and most of them cannot afford to take it, even when they technically have access to it. In Ohio 45.9% of workers have no access to paid time off when they or a family member are sick⁴, forcing that person to decide between getting paid or taking care of her sick loved one.

I have sat with a close friend as she had to deal with complicated medical diagnosis during a very much-wanted pregnancy. Trying to answer the “what if” questions. Trying to navigate not only what was best for her family, but also balancing that with what was best for her physical and mental health. With this bill we turn doctors into inquisitors. How do we define “knowingly”? How will a doctor have to prove that they did not know the reason for the woman terminating her pregnancy?

With my friend, I do not think that we would have been able to navigate that complicated system and very emotional time if we did not trust her medical providers to be giving her complete information about her situation. When she did make the decision that was right for her and her family, I shudder to think of what could have happened if her doctor would have been forced to turn her away, not being able to provide the medical care she needed. With this bill we will be doing exactly that—tying the hands of doctors who want to provide the medical care that their patients have chosen as the right care for them.

Abortion is a deeply personal and often complex decision for a woman. You can’t make that decision for someone else. Ultimately, decisions about whether to choose adoption, end a pregnancy, or raise a child must be left to a woman, her family and her faith, with the counsel of her doctor or health care provider.

¹ <http://www.ocecd.org/Downloads/OCECD%20Sp%20Ed%20Funding%20Update-Final%205%202014.pdf>

² *Doe v. State of Ohio* will be argued in 2016 in the U.S. District Court for the Southern District of Ohio before Judge Watson. <http://www.ocecd.org/Downloads/Special%20Educ%20Profile%20Report%203%205%202015.pdf>

³ <http://innovationohio.org/2015/05/06/io-analysis-the-benefits-of-paid-parental-leave/>

⁴ <http://www.nationalpartnership.org/research-library/work-family/psd/workers-access-to-paid-sick-days-in-the-states.pdf>