

October 21, 2015

Testimony in Opposition to SB 214

Rabbi Misha Zinkow

Ohio Religious Coalition for Reproductive Choice

Senate Government Oversight and Reform Committee

Thank you, Chairperson Coley, Ranking Minority Member Yuko, and members of the Senate Government Oversight and Reform Committee, for hearing my testimony.

I am Rabbi Misha Zinkow, Senior Rabbi of Temple Israel, which is located at 5419 E. Broad Street. I was ordained as a rabbi in 1985 by the Hebrew Union College-Jewish Institute of Religion, whose main campus is located in Cincinnati.

As I rabbi, it is important that I state unequivocally that Jewish tradition is clear: life is precious. And while all denominations of Judaism teach that an abortion is a serious matter and not something to be done casually, there are times when, if there is a grave risk to a woman's physical or mental health, one is not merely permitted, but *required* to terminate a pregnancy. Rabbis across the denominational spectrum also agree that this is a decision a woman should undertake with the advice of her physician and the counsel of a rabbi.

I am proud to be a member of the Central Conference of American Rabbis (Reform Movement, the largest denomination in the United States) which has affirmed and reaffirmed on many occasions that the decision about a pregnancy belongs to the woman in consultation with her doctor. The CCAR stated its position on reproductive rights as early as 1975: "Jewish tradition has addressed itself to the question of the termination of pregnancy. We believe that in any decision whether or not to terminate a pregnancy, the individual family or woman must weigh the tradition as they struggle to formulate their own religious and moral criteria to reach their own personal decision. We believe that the proper locus for formulating these religious and moral criteria and for making this decision must be the individual family or woman and not the state or other external agency.... as we would not impose the historic position of Jewish teaching upon individuals nor legislate it as normative for society at large, so we would not wish the position of any other group imposed upon the Jewish community or the general population... We reject all constitutional amendments that would abridge or circumscribe this right."

From my perspective as a rabbi, with my personal views aligned with my tradition and my rabbinic colleagues, I would therefore hope that you would reject SB 214.