

Lisa Perriera MD, MPH
Opponent Testimony on SB 145
House Criminal Justice Committee
Tuesday, February 13, 2018

Chairman Manning, Ranking Minority Leader Celebrezze, and distinguished members of the House Criminal Justice Committee I thank you for the opportunity to provide written testimony in opposition of SB 145. My name is Lisa Perriera and I am a board certified obstetrician gynecologist and have completed specialty training in family planning. I previously lived and worked in Cleveland, OH from 2009-2015, and now practice gynecology in Philadelphia, PA. I could not sit idly by in Pennsylvania and watch as legislation that will harm the women of Ohio and can criminalize doctors for providing standard medical care is proposed. It is my moral obligation to speak out against this harmful bill. Frankly put, SB 145 bans a medical procedure which SAVES LIVES!

I will tell you the story of a patient I will call Melanie. She was admitted the hospital after her water had broken at about 20 weeks of pregnancy. When I met her in the hospital she wanted us to do everything to save the life of her very wanted baby. But what she didn't realize was that by trying to save the life of the baby her life would be at risk. She had a severe uterine infection that had made her blood pressure drop, her heart pump dangerously fast, and her white blood cell count quadruple to fight off the strong infection. Her temperature was 103 degrees, and she had extreme uterine tenderness. She met all criteria for sepsis, which could claim her life. We had to explain to her that in addition to giving her antibiotics, the best and quickest way to treat her was to remove the source of the infection which was the pregnancy inside of her uterus. She was two centimeters dilated which was enough to perform the life-saving surgical abortion procedure she desperately needed. She agreed to the surgery so that she could survive to care for the two small children she already had at home. Had this procedure been illegal we would have had to provide a labor induction abortion, which can take 24-48 hours, at which point she could have succumbed to the infection.

I am so thankful that I have the skills to provide this life-saving surgery and that I could discuss this option with my patient and her family without the interference of legislators in the medical decision-making. Without this option Melanie's story may have ended very differently. Melanie could have wound up like Savita Hallapanavar, a 31 year old dentist who lived Ireland and died of sepsis in 2012 from a pregnancy infection. Savita had begged for an abortion to save her life but because abortion is illegal in Ireland nobody would give her this life-saving treatment. These are just two stories, but I have countless others that I could tell.

I implore the committee to oppose SB 145 which bans a very safe method of abortion that's used by many physicians because of its proven record through years of research and medical practice. The bottom line is, it's important that doctors, and not politicians, can decide what care is best for patients. Physicians should never be put in a position to have to choose an inferior medical treatment which risks the lives of patients for fear of criminal prosecution. I thank you so much for your time and apologize that I cannot be there in person to answer any questions you may have.