

**Iris E. Harvey
Opponent Testimony
Senate Bill 164
Ohio Senate Health, Human Services, and Medicaid Committee
September 12, 2017**

Chairman Burke, Vice Chair Beagle, Ranking Member Tavares, and members of the Senate Health, Human Services, and Medicaid Committee, thank you for the opportunity to present testimony in opposition to Senate Bill 164. My name is Iris E. Harvey, and I am President and CEO of Planned Parenthood of Greater Ohio and Planned Parenthood Advocates of Ohio.

Senate Bill 164 does nothing to improve or protect women's health; it simply limits access to reproductive health care and is designed to shame and judge women. Even more distastefully, it attempts to use the disability community as a political wedge to continue to chip away at women's access to safe and legal abortion. This bill is part of the larger attack on women's rights that has been propagated by ideologue members of the Ohio legislature, politicians thinking more about their next campaign than they are about the women and families of Ohio.

Senate Bill 164 dangerously intrudes upon the doctor/patient relationship. Patients must be able to trust their doctors to keep their personal and private information confidential. By requiring doctors to certify that a woman is not seeking an abortion in part or whole due to a prenatal diagnosis – under penalty of loss of medical license and even criminal prosecution – doctors are put in the place of investigators. This bill will cause a chilling effect on the doctor/patient relationship, leading patients to forgo asking necessary questions regarding their pregnancy and doctors from discussing information regarding test results or even the potential of a diagnosis, so as not to potentially incur prosecution. Patients need open and clear information regarding their health to make good, sound judgments, and not worry about potential prosecution.

This bill is not supported nor advanced by medical associations and disability rights associations. In fact, the Down Syndrome Association of Central Ohio specifically disavows involvement on this bill and states on its website the following:

While DSACO celebrates the lives of individuals with Down syndrome, we have always maintained the stance that providing parents and physicians the most updated and accurate information about Down syndrome in both a prenatal and postpartum setting best promotes our mission to empower individuals, educate families, enhance communities and together, celebrate the extraordinary lives of people with Down syndrome. (<http://dsaco.net/advocacyinitiatives/>)

The American Congress of Obstetricians and Gynecologists has also spoken out against these types of bills with the following statement:

These 'reason bans' represent gross interference in the patient-physician relationship, creating a system in which patients and physicians are forced to withhold information or

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outright lie in order to ensure access to care. In some cases, this will come at a time when a woman's health, and even her life, is at stake, and when honest, empathetic health counseling is in order. Moreover, it threatens to hold physicians liable for providing women with the care that they need.

This bill does not support the disability community by providing resources for parents and children with special needs. All that it does is remove the ability of a woman to make whatever choice she feels is best for the future of her family. While for many families, deciding to continue the pregnancy is the right decision, this law forces all families to make the same decision regardless of the circumstances. Legislators cannot know the situation of every woman, and they certainly should not be the ones to make the determination.

Currently, prenatal diagnostic testing is offered as early as ten weeks, or within the first trimester. Prohibiting a woman from making a decision to terminate for any reason before viability is clearly unconstitutional under *Roe v. Wade*. Instead of spending any more hard-earned Ohio tax dollars on unconstitutional legislation that will ultimately be overturned, legislators should spend time on initiatives that actually support families with disabilities, including ensuring robust insurance coverage and providing adequate resources for special education programs in our schools. Instead of working against and limiting women's reproductive rights, I urge you to work for the true needs of Ohioans. Please oppose this bill.