



**Testimony of Andrea Martinez,
Emeritus Board Member of Women Have Options - Ohio,
Senate Health, Human Services And Medicaid Committee
Senate Bill 23
February 26, 2019**

Chairman Burke, Ranking Member Antonio, and members of the Senate Health, Human Services and Medicaid Committee, thank you for the opportunity to testify in opposition to Senate Bill 23. My name is Andrea Martinez and I am a Nurse at one of Ohio's abortion providing clinics as well as an Emeritus Board Member of Women Have Options, Ohio's abortion fund. I am here to testify on behalf of my patients and to share how devastating SB 23 will be for pregnant folks in Ohio. This is my first time testifying in committee because I have never been able to get the time off and public speaking is particularly nerve wracking for me. But this is more important than that fear and I felt the need to show up for my patients.

Access to abortion, even if a person never exercises that right, is a societal and existential good for all. If a woman becomes pregnant, even if she can never imagine getting an abortion, she still knows she could. She knows that having that being pregnant and adding to her family is a choice. With access to abortion, she's able to embrace the situation rather than feel she has no control over her own destiny. We've heard the stories and have not forgotten the desperation that women felt when they could not control their own bodies. When they sought abortion by other means or kept having babies because they had no access to safe or legal abortion or contraception. Having control over your own body is a necessity and a human right.

If you pass this bill, my patients would be denied access to safe and affordable abortion options in their community. It is surreal to even imagine how many people and families would be devastated. Imposing such a punitive law would decimate pregnant people's self-determination by eliminating their ability to plan their families. And make no mistake: low-income and financially overburdened women will suffer the brunt of this ban.

Abortion would not go away though. While those who can afford them would travel out of state; many others would suffer. I have personally seen that suffering already. I have been working at abortion providing clinics in Ohio since 2005 and have seen the toll abortion restrictions have on my patients. But they still figure out a way to have them. Patients have figured out how to find childcare, take 2 days off of work, travel hundreds of miles, and pay \$500 to thousands of dollars. They've overcome the emotional strain of the state mandated counseling, the trauma induced by the clinic protestors and the constant news that, at any moment, their state lawmakers could pull access out from under them.

Many of those most likely to be impacted by this ban are already facing challenging circumstances. And targeting abortion access is particularly harmful, especially for those who need it most. The decision to have an abortion is a personal medical decision that shouldn't be made by politicians. My patients should be trusted and respected to make their own health care decisions, period.