



To: Ohio Senate Health, Human Services and Medicaid Committee

Re: Statement of Opposition to Ohio Senate Bill 23

Date: February 25, 2019

New Voices for Reproductive Justice unequivocally opposes Ohio Senate Bill 23, an unconstitutional 6-week abortion ban. This bill violates U.S. Supreme Court precedent and would have sweeping negative impacts for thousands of Black women and LGBTQ+ individuals, and their families.

New Voices for Reproductive Justice is a Human Rights and Reproductive Justice advocacy organization with a mission to build a social change movement dedicated to the full health and well-being of Black women, femmes, and girls in Pennsylvania and Ohio. Reproductive Justice is the human right of all to have full agency in decision-making about our bodies, gender identity and expression, sexuality, work, reproduction and the ability to form families. Since 2004, our organization has reached over 75,000 women of color and LGBTQ+ people, through community organizing, grassroots activism, civic engagement, youth mentorship, leadership development, culture change, public policy advocacy, and political education.

SB 23 threatens the health and well-being of Black Ohioans by coercing them to give birth against their will, and by denying them the right to an abortion as promised under *Roe v. Wade* and affirmed under *Planned Parenthood v. Casey*.

The Legislature is attempting to pass SB 23 against the will of Black Ohians, which is illustrated in polling research. 87% of recently polled Black voters in Ohio support a woman's right to abortion, and 98% want this care to be directed by a doctor--not the Ohio Legislature, which polled at 0%.¹ In denying us full agency over our own bodies and futures, SB 23 is a clear demonstration of reproductive oppression, and a violation of both our constitutional and human rights.

¹ *Black Ohioans on Reproductive Health and Rights*, PerryUndem Research/Communication for In Our Own Voice: National Black Women's Agenda.



Black women and our families already experience the highest rates of maternal death and infant mortality. In the United States and Ohio, Black women are three times more likely than our white counterparts to die from pregnancy complications. Similarly, in Ohio, Black infants are three times more likely than their white counterparts to die before their first birthday, the direct result of institutional and environmental harm on multiple fronts.

It is unacceptable that lawmakers continue to ignore these dire health disparities and attempt to control our decision-making about pregnancy and parenting, while pushing crucial healthcare even further out of reach.

It is incumbent upon the Ohio Legislature to remedy the existing healthcare inequities in our state and to increase our health options, not unconstitutionally interfere with our ability to make decisions about our own bodies and lives.

Black women have experienced an unequal playing field for too long in our healthcare system. When anti-abortion laws and policies are forced on to the public, our healthcare becomes even more limited. Our agency, economic futures, and the well-being of our families are also compromised.

The decision to have an abortion is both a personal privacy right and a fundamental human right. For the last 15 years, New Voices has been an advocacy leader in communities most disproportionately harmed by reproductive oppression, and around laws and policies that impact Reproductive Justice at the federal, state and local levels. As we lead a powerful movement across Ohio, we are educating the Black women, girls, and femmes we serve on the laws and policies that affect them, and the voting records of legislators who are elected to represent their interests in state government.

We have seen harmful, unconstitutional bans, like SB23 defeated in court repeatedly, and we stand, yet again, firmly against this biased, coercive and unconstitutional proposed legislation.