

Dear Ohio Senate Health Committee,

When I was 26 I had an abortion. At the time I was fresh out of grad school and fortunate enough to work in my field of interest. I had done some traveling and was living in my second apartment on my own. Many of the tangible things in my life were the result of trusting my gut instinct, and at age 26, when faced with an extremely unplanned pregnancy I followed my instincts and made my first parenting decision. After thoroughly assessing my life I knew that it wasn't the right time for me to choose motherhood. That there were things such as financial stability and a backyard that I wanted to offer any children of mine and at that time I was absolutely incapable of doing so.

When I found out I was pregnant I was approximately six weeks based on my last menstrual period. I am fortunate to be pretty in tune with my body and knew that something was amiss before my actual missed period. I am also fortunate that abortion care was an accessible option for me. The biggest barrier I had to navigate was scheduling a day off from work, yet I even consider my scheduling inconvenience a blessing in disguise. Although the intent of mandatory waiting periods are to dissuade us by using time as a tool to chisel away at our self esteem and certainty, the three weeks between discovering I was pregnant and my abortion were the most positively introspective weeks of my life. I gained perspective about how I would chose to navigate adulthood and what values I would uphold.

While pregnant I thought about all of the sacrifices my mother had made for me to live a life I love. I thought about my grandmother who had done the same, and my two aunts. I thought about the many family gatherings I had growing up and realized just how important family was to me. I felt as if this unplanned pregnancy was a nudge from God to continue pursuing my passions and creating a life that would sustain the family I someday hope to have of my own.

My abortion was a blessing and I am so grateful that I was able to access one in a timely manner. S.B. 27 hones in on a gestational period during which some people are like me and just finding out they're pregnant but most people don't even know yet. This bill would effectively outlaw abortion and bodily autonomy. The majority of people who have abortions are already parenting and this bill would outlaw Ohioans rights to decide our own family values too.

I hope that while deciding the fate of S.B. 27 our legislature thinks of their families, and think about how 1 in 3 women have had an abortion so it is quite likely someone in their family, someone whom they love dearly as had one too. Accessible Abortion is a family value.

Sincerely,
Ashley Underwood

Cleveland, Ohio