

WITNESS INFORMATION FORM

Please complete the Witness Information Form before testifying:

Date: March 25, 2021

Name: The Reverend Terry D. Williams

Are you representing: ~~Yourself~~ **Organization X**

Organization (If Applicable): The Ohio Religious Coalition for Reproductive Choice

Position/Title: Faith Organizer

Address: P.O. Box 82204

City: Columbus State: Ohio Zip: 43202

Best Contact Telephone: 614-477-9317 Email: terry@ohiorcrc.org

Do you wish to be added to the committee notice email distribution list? **Yes X** ~~No~~

Business before the committee

Legislation (Bill/Resolution Number): HB 55

Specific Issue: Allow House committees/sessions be conducted virtually

Are you testifying as a: **Proponent X** ~~Opponent~~ ~~Interested Party~~

Will you have a written statement, visual aids, or other material to distribute? **Yes X** ~~No~~

(If yes, please send an electronic version of the documents, if possible, to the Chair's office prior to committee. You may also submit hard copies to the Chair's staff prior to committee.)

How much time will your testimony require? I am testifying by written statement only.

Please provide a brief statement on your position: Please see written statement below.

Please be advised that this form and any materials (written or otherwise) submitted or presented to this committee are records that may be requested by the public and may be published online.

The Reverend Terry D. Williams of the Ohio Religious Coalition for Reproductive Choice

Testimony for March 25, 2021 Ohio House Government Oversight Committee Hearing on HB55

Chairman Wilkin, Vice Chairwoman White, Ranking Member Sweeney, and other distinguished members of the committee, thank you for taking time today to allow me to share testimony concerning House Bill 55.

My name is The Reverend Terry Williams. I am an Ordained minister of the United Church of Christ, and I currently serve as Lead Pastor of Orchard Hill United Church of Christ in Chillicothe. As a Christian pastor, I am called to ministries of preaching, spiritual care, faith formation, and teaching within my local congregation.

In addition to my work in the parish, I am a faith organizer with the Ohio Religious Coalition for Reproductive Choice and a member of Ohio Clergy for Choice, a group of clergy and religious leaders from across Ohio who support a person's ability to access a full range of reproductive health services, including safe and legal abortion.

As people of faith who believe strongly in the power of relationship, community dialogue, and holy discernment, we wholeheartedly support the effort to expand testimony access in the form of virtual testimony during committee hearings of the Ohio General Assembly.

While the ability of Ohioans to be heard on issues of conscience, religious freedom, and matters of import before the General Assembly is certainly a critical component of our support for this legislation, we also recognize the provisions found in HB55 to be a protection of the essential role of information exchange within the legislative process.

Your work in this committee can oftentimes be tedious; meticulous, careful scrutiny of every element of legislation is rarely invigorating and almost never glamorous. Yet it is this hard, slogging-along kind of legislative labor that is absolutely essential to producing high-quality policy and good bills that eventually become great laws.

The work that you do in this place is extraordinarily difficult. A tremendous volume of work often funneled into a very narrow frame of time, the work of the Ohio General Assembly is enriched by the voices of ordinary Ohioans – sector professionals, business people, community organizations, faith groups, and individuals who are directly impacted by the legislation under consideration.

All of these voices bring a richness to the process of legislative revision and scrutiny that simply cannot be duplicated through other less-engaging methods. Like the many layers of a decadent

pastry or the complex notes of a fine wine, the best legislative products come from the involved participation of lots of varied voices and differing positions that interact with one another.

At Ohio RCRC we are persuaded that legislation is best made when more voices—not fewer—are given the opportunity to be heard and are allowed to positively impact your process of revision and scrutiny here in committee.

Today we see your counterpart bodies in other states making similar adjustments to those found in HB55, allowing for virtual testimony in statehouses, providing more access to more voices to make better legislation all across the nation. Ohio deserves the chance to continue being the heart of deliberative democracy and you deserve the chance to make the best possible legislative products in committee with the input of those for whom you write laws—the people of our great state.

While we may not always agree on matters of policy or principle, one thing that we should all be able to agree on is crystal clear: no one ever made better laws by refusing to listen.

Support HB55 today and at every step in its legislative journey. Choose to listen to Ohioans fully & freely via virtual testimony. Do this for the sake of our state, and for the sake of the state of the legislation you work so hard to craft with care each and every day.

Rev. Terry Williams
Faith Organizer
Ohio Religious Coalition for Reproductive Choice
P.O. Box 82204
Columbus, OH 43202