

Chair Wilkin, Vice-Chair White, Ranking Member Brown, and Members of the House Government Oversight Committee, thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony in favor of House Bill 598, the Human Life Protection Act. I am Adam Mathews, the vice mayor from Lebanon, Ohio, an attorney, and have been board chair for a network of pro-life women's centers in Southwest Ohio. I am speaking in support of the Human Life Protection Act. I would like to thank you for taking this step, to show that Ohio is ready, culturally and legally, for a post-*Roe* America. This law is necessary, so we can join the bi-partisan collection of 18 states with similar statutes, to protect mothers and their to-be-born children.

This is what I've learned from my Church, from helping those on the brink of choosing an abortion or choosing life, from holding healthy babies, to sitting with peoples mourning miscarriages, to making faces at a child whose mother reversed the abortion pill after the first dose. Human life must be respected and protected absolutely from the moment of conception. From the first moment of his existence, a human being must be recognized as having the rights of a person, among which is the inviolable right of every innocent being to life. The inalienable right to life of every innocent human individual is a constitutive element of a civil society and its legislation: The inalienable rights of the person must be recognized and respected by civil society and the political authority. These human rights depend neither on single individuals nor on parents; nor do they represent a concession made by society and the state; they belong to human nature and are inherent in the person by virtue of the creative act from which the person took his origin. Among such fundamental rights is every human being's right to life and physical integrity from the moment of conception until death. The moment a positive law deprives a category of human beings of the protection which civil legislation ought to accord them, the state is denying the

equality of all before the law. When the state does not place its power at the service of the rights of each citizen, and in particular of the more vulnerable, the very foundations of a state based on law are undermined. As a consequence of the respect and protection which must be ensured for the unborn child from the moment of conception, the law must provide appropriate penal sanctions for every deliberate violation of the child's rights.

The legal ramifications for House Bill 598 are strong and targeted at those providing for abortions, not the mothers.

I applaud the sponsors for their language, at section 2904.22, stating “A woman on whom an abortion was induced or attempted shall be immune from prosecution.” It even gives her extra legal protections and rights of action. No matter what the law is, we need to be ready and willing to walk beside women, families, mothers and fathers, put in situations in which they do not believe they have any way out. After 49 years of legalized abortion, there are many who are and will continue to be in need of love, mercy, assistance, and compassion even if, dare we hope, the Supreme Court rules favorably in *Dobbs v. Jackson's Whole Women's Health* and Ohio protects babies and mothers.

I have seen Ohio's dedication to its pro-life stance. By providing TANF funds to organizations serving families in need, providing for the Ohio Parenting and Pregnancy Program, and the adoption deposit program from House Bill 405, it is evident we know how to care for the child and her family, from the government side, comprehensively. Pregnancy Centers in Ohio give more than \$15 million in services and materials to women, men, and families in a year,¹ including

¹ 2019 Pregnancy Center State Impact Report, Care Net and Charlotte Lozier Institute. \$9,091,568 in medical services, \$4,432,219 in Family Services, and \$1,610,705 in material items.

everything from free ultrasounds and pre-natal care to diapers, cribs, and strollers, to relationship and marriage counseling and car seats. As Ohioans, we are ready.

Passing House Bill 598 will also signal to the Supreme Court that we are ready to handle the return of the abortion question to the states. In the same way that cities and states recognized same-sex marriages before *Obergefell* gave the Court the confidence to provide legal support for sweeping cultural change, cities like Lebanon and states like the great state of Ohio passing strong pro-life laws can show we are culturally and legally ready for *Roe v. Wade* and its legal progeny to be overturned.

I am Adam Mathews, I support the passage of the Human Life Protection Act, and I want to thank this committee in advance for your thoughtful consideration of this legislation before you today.

I would be happy to answer any questions at this time.