



The American College of  
Obstetricians and Gynecologists  
WOMEN'S HEALTH CARE PHYSICIANS

**Ohio Section**  
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**Ohio House  
Government Oversight Committee  
HB598 To Enact The Human Life Protection Act (Schmidt)  
American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists, Ohio Section**

Chair Wilkin, Vice Chair Swearingen, Ranking Member Brown and esteemed members of the Committee, my name is Dr. Amy Burkett. I am an obstetrician-gynecologist currently working in Ohio at a major medical institution as an OBGYN hospitalist and centering pregnancy facilitator for at-risk moms in northeast Ohio. I have lived in Ohio my entire life. I received my medical degree from the Northeast Ohio Medical University, affectionately known as NEOMED, and then did my residency at The Ohio State University Medical Center before returning to Northeast Ohio. I was in private practice for 10 years and worked as a Laborist for four years before starting my current position.

I am here today on behalf of the American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists (ACOG), of which I am the Immediate Past Chair of the Ohio Section and currently serve as the District V Legislative Chair. As you may know, ACOG is the nationally recognized foremost organization dedicated to the improvement of women's health and our specialty's professional membership organization. Using its members' expertise and in conjunction with the OBGYN subspecialty groups ACOG produces *guidelines and educational materials that are viewed as the standard of care for patients*. In Ohio, ACOG represents over 1500 obstetrician-gynecologists and their patients; and nationally ACOG represents approximately 58,000 obstetrician-gynecologists and women's health care professionals. As the nation's leading group of physicians providing health care for women, our members dedicate their career and lives to delivering evidenced-based care with quality, safety, integrity, and compassion. ACOG strongly opposes medically unjustified regulations of health care, including restrictions on abortion care, and respectfully urges you to oppose HB598.

ACOG recognizes that the abortion debate comes from profound moral conviction from all perspectives. While we respect the need of our members to determine their own personal values and beliefs, the organization's statement on abortion is clear (attached), "Induced abortion is an essential component of women's health care. Like all medical matters, decisions regarding abortion should be made by patients in consultation with their health care providers and without undue interference by outside parties. Like all patients, women obtaining abortion are entitled to privacy, dignity, respect, and support." ACOG is committed to ensuring optimal women's health and is opposed to legislative proposals that limit women's access to medical care. ACOG supports women's access to all medical care, including family planning, contraception, and pregnancy outcome determinations.

The explicit goal of this bill is to immediately ban all abortions in our state absent constitutional protections. This represents a stunning and sweeping intrusion into the patient-physician relationship and threatens to irreparably harm the health and autonomy of women in Ohio. It seeks to place clinicians in the ethically unacceptable position of denying needed care to their patients and take decisions about continuing a pregnancy out of the hands of the pregnant woman.

Physicians are ethically required to ensure their patients receive the most appropriate and effective care. These ethical obligations are expressed through several principles, one of which is patient autonomy. Patient autonomy recognizes that patients have ultimate control over their own health and a right to a meaningful choice when making medical decisions. It requires us as physicians to honor and respect patient decisions about the course of their care. This principle illustrates the injustice and inappropriateness of government restrictions on reproductive health care, which would deny a patient the care they have determined is right for them.

Now that I have outlined ACOG's abortion policy and position, I ask you to listen to the testimony of my colleagues with an open mind. The word abortion immediately triggers an emotional response and for many a predetermined expectation of what abortion is; today, you will hear from physicians who will talk to you about hard decisions made by women and their families. Abortion rarely fits into the neat, tidy box wrapped up in the sound bites we hear on TV and the 120 characters of social media. As obstetricians and gynecologists, we are the ones who not only deliver healthy newborns to a joyous mothers, but also the news when a pregnancy has diagnosis that is incompatible with life outside of the uterus. We are the physicians in the room with women who desperately want a healthy pregnancy but instead hear the worst news of their lives. It is our job as OBGYNs to counsel and provide options to our patients with very serious medical conditions about the health risks of continuing pregnancy. I ask you to please take time to consider all the reasons a woman might choose to have an abortion procedure.

Thank you for the opportunity to offer opponent testimony for HB598. We appreciate your consideration, urge you to vote no on this bill, and hope you will consider ACOG Ohio a valuable resource for all items relating to the practice of obstetrics and gynecology and women's health issues.

#### **References:**

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