

Chair Wilkin, Vice-Chair White, Ranking Member Brown, and Members of the House Government Oversight Committee, thank you for allowing me to provide opponent testimony on House Bill 598, the Abortion Trigger ban.

My name is Jessica Epstein and unlike the proponents of this bill from last week I don't have any fancy titles from any big-name organizations seeking to push my views on others. While I don't have these titles, I do represent an overwhelming majority who say, "abortion should remain legal in all or most cases."<sup>1</sup> I am ordinary working mom living in Ohio House district 36 and Senate district 28. I have two beautiful children that exist today because of the abortion I received in 2003.

August 2003 was a big month for me. I turned 18, I moved into the freshman dorms and after a few weeks of dorm living found myself pregnant. My focus at that time was supposed to be on school, making new friends and getting a degree so that one day I could get a good job and provide for a family. I had a decision to make. One that I did not take lightly and one that would determine how my life would look for decades. A decision that I was free to make. I began with research. I didn't have to look far in my doing my research I just simply asked my closet circle of friends & family who all their own stories to tell. I spoke to half a dozen people whose choices ranged from marriage and parenthood to open adoption to abortion. I called healthcare clinics and adoption agencies. I imagined my own happy childhood and knew I would not be able to provide the same on my own. I had no car, no job, and no higher education.

Ultimately it was clear that someday yes, I wanted to be a parent, but now was not the time. If I was going to be a parent, I was going to do it when I was ready, when I was able to fully care for them and when I would be able to give them the childhood I wanted them to have. And so, with that I made the appointment, got a ride to the clinic, and chose surgical abortion which was the most fiscally responsible option available to me.

When I arrived at the clinic, I was surprised to see protesters out front. I hadn't considered this possibility before then and although they left me alone, I still recall their eyes on me and the unnecessary embarrassment they were attempting to inflict. After some scheduling mishaps I was able to receive a medication abortion which ended up being a much better option as I was able to be at home and out of the provider's office. Medication abortion is safe, effective and has been used by more than 4 million people, including myself, since approved by the FDA over 20 years ago. It is safer than Tylenol, Viagra and childbirth with serious complications occurring in less than 0.5% of patients<sup>2</sup>.

The goal of the egregious ban being proposed today is the end of abortion. However, there is now end to abortion. You are only ending legal abortion in Ohio. Making abortion illegal in one state will not suddenly mean it is unsafe. We will continue to have medications such as abortion pills for people to self-manage their abortions safely at home. The ban attempts to criminalize and further stigmatize what should be a personal decision. If enacted, the harm will not fall hardest me. Should my children need or want an abortion themselves one day they will get it. Whether we leave the country, or they manage it

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.pewresearch.org/religion/fact-sheet/public-opinion-on-abortion/>

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.fda.gov/drugs/postmarket-drug-safety-information-patients-and-providers/mifeprex-mifepristone-information>

themselves at home, they will get it. No. If enacted the harm will fall hardest on those that already facing significant barriers to accessing healthcare.

And we have been shown time and time again we cannot count on government to protect us once that child is born. We can not count on government to help us feed our newborns when there is a formula recall. We can not count on government to protect our children from being slaughtered while attending school. We certainly can not count on government to know what's best for our individual families, and for our own bodies. We do not need lawmakers who push one-size-fits-all laws that don't work. We are individuals making difficult, complicated, personal medical decisions based on what we believe is best for our lives and circumstances. We need lawmakers to listen to the majority of constituents and preserve abortion as fundamental human right.

Thank you and I will take any questions from the committee at this time.