

Thank you Chairman Shane Wilkin, Vice-Chair D.J. Swearingen, and Ranking Member Richard Brown and members of the Government Oversight Committee for your time today. I appreciate the opportunity to share my story with you this morning.

My name is Kasey Renee Shaw and, in 2016, I was pregnant. I was 21 and in college; I came from a blue-collar family and worked minimum wage jobs and took out student loans to fund my education. As I was exiting an abusive relationship and entering a new one, I learned I was pregnant. My former partner had sexually assaulted me, thrusting me into a situation I'd never imagined I'd be in. I believed then that terminating my pregnancy was the right decision. Now, 6 years later, I know it was the decision that saved my life.

I stand in front of you all today as a result of that life-saving choice and to oppose House Bill 598, which would ban abortion in the state of Ohio. According to research done by the Pew Research Institute<sup>1</sup>, 62% of Americans support abortion “in all or most circumstances.”

When I learned I was pregnant, my options were extremely limited. I don't remember another time in my life where I was more terrified. My then-boyfriend, a friend to this day, was my only support. I was too scared to tell anyone else for fear of judgment, of violence, of forced birth. Physically, mentally, and emotionally, I could not support a child or sustain a pregnancy. I was tricked into visiting a pregnancy resource center that promised to gift me diapers and a seat at a local church pew, but what I needed extended far beyond their offers. I needed to escape my abuser, not to be permanently linked to him for the rest of my life, and certainly not to make him a father; I needed to finish my education because my parents always made me swear that I'd try to earn a better life for myself, better than what they had growing up; I needed access to healthcare and mental health services that I simply didn't have as a young, poor college student; I needed my “right to life”; I needed an abortion.

A country that takes away our rights without regard for public opinion and public health does not serve the people. This bill does not serve the people. It condemns the lives of pregnant people and the careers and well-being of medical professionals. It steals away the freedom we've been guaranteed since 1971, when *Roe v. Wade* ensured that “state laws that banned abortion [is] unconstitutional.”

I want to condemn the hypocrisy of Representative Jean Schmidt and the co-sponsors of this bill, who coincidentally ignored Governor DeWine's safety protocols and health orders during the COVID-19 emergency declaration because, as Rep. Schmidt said she believes, decisions like

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.pewresearch.org/religion/2022/05/06/americas-abortion-quandary/>

whether or not to have a vaccine is “best left to a person and their doctor”<sup>2</sup> and that “the federal government should not interfere in state affairs.”<sup>3</sup>

Rep. Schmidt is also on record saying that, in the case of victims of sexual assault, that pregnancy is an “opportunity...to make a determination about what [that person is] going to do to help that life be a productive human being.”

Earlier I said that my pregnancy was the most terrifying time in my life—that was until right now. To put it plainly, House Bill 598 reintroduces me to the feelings of terror I’d only known when I was 21 years old and alone, broke, and broken. Society was telling me that I needed to be able to raise a “productive” human being, but how was I to do that when I had limited access to educational, financial, and social resources that would help me parent? How was I to raise a child in a society who believes that birth is a suitable consequence of rape? How am I to entertain becoming a mother in the future in a country that allows their people to suffer, to die, as a result of inadequate access to healthcare? Parents, right now, are already experiencing a formula shortage on a national scale. Just last week 192 republicans in congress voted against funding to help relieve the formula crisis.<sup>4</sup> How are we to provide for the so-called “unborn” when we cannot even provide for the “born”?

I am asking the Ohio General Assembly to prioritize the lives of pregnant people and vote NO on H.B. 598. Ohioans deserve access to healthcare, and that includes abortions services.

I would be happy to answer any questions the committee members may have.

I’d like to thank the committee for their time once more. Thank you.

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<sup>2</sup>[http://lovelandbeacon.com/state-representative-jean-schmidt-issues-statement-on-governors-announcement/?utm\\_source=rss&utm\\_medium=rss&utm\\_campaign=state-representative-jean-schmidt-issues-statement-on-governors-announcement](http://lovelandbeacon.com/state-representative-jean-schmidt-issues-statement-on-governors-announcement/?utm_source=rss&utm_medium=rss&utm_campaign=state-representative-jean-schmidt-issues-statement-on-governors-announcement)

<sup>3</sup><https://ohiohouse.gov/members/jean-schmidt/news/schmidt-issues-statement-on-door-to-door-vaccine-efforts-106920>

<sup>4</sup> <https://www.washingtonpost.com/politics/2022/05/19/republicans-baby-formula/>