



**WOMEN HAVE OPTIONS OHIO (WHO/O)  
WRITTEN-ONLY OPPONENT TESTIMONY ON HB 598  
HOUSE GOVERNMENT OVERSIGHT COMMITTEE  
MAY 26, 2022**

Chairman Wilkin, Vice Chair Swearingen, Ranking Member Brown, and members of the House Government Oversight Committee, thank you for the opportunity to testify in opposition to House Bill 598. My name is Maggie Scotece, and I am the Interim Executive Director of Women Have Options—also called WHO/O—which is Ohio’s only statewide abortion fund.

Over the last three decades, WHO/O has provided financial and practical support to help Ohioans afford contraception, emergency contraception, and abortion services. We distribute funds to all of Ohio’s clinics & coordinate with patients to arrange transportation, lodging, childcare, and more so they can access the care they deserve.

HB 598 would effectively ban abortion in all cases, and the so-called ‘exceptions’ provided within the language appear only to be affirmative defenses, not true exceptions. The only goal of this legislation is to create fear, uncertainty, and shame in the hearts of pregnant Ohioans. I urge committee members to vote against HB 598 because this bill is not only blatantly unconstitutional and shameful, it is dangerous for pregnant folks across the state of Ohio.

You cannot ban abortion without also criminalizing folks who are pregnant and experience a wide variety of pregnancy outcomes. An estimated 31-50% of pregnancies end in miscarriage. HB 598 would ban abortion in all cases and would make performing an abortion a first-degree felony. This bill doesn’t even contain an exception for the life of the pregnant person or in case of rape or incest. Instead it has a complicated and largely meaningless “affirmative defense” when the life of the pregnant person is at risk. This distinction was glossed over several times during proponent testimony, but it is extremely important. The only reason to have this carve out as an affirmative defense instead of a straightforward exemption is because fear is the goal. Doctors who wish to save the life of their pregnant patient must affirmatively risk criminalization, and all that entails, in the hopes that their defense will be successful at trial. Make no mistake this bill intentionally criminalizes Doctors for attempting to save the lives of their patients. Proponents of this bill are hoping nobody will notice how extreme and dangerous this small change will be for pregnant folks in Ohio.

The bill, if enacted, would also prohibit the manufacturing and sale of medications and devices intended for use in abortions, prohibit promoting abortion, and criminalize individuals who safely self-manage their abortions. This prohibition will have wide criminalization and chilling effect on everything from spontaneous miscarriages, miscarriage management, and free speech in Ohio. Even if Roe v. Wade is overturned, this bill will still be unconstitutional and will cost the taxpayers of Ohio millions of dollars to defend. Others are forced to continue unwanted pregnancies, stripping them of their autonomy.

Contrary to anti-abortion testimony, self-managed abortions and in-clinic abortions are incredibly safe. Mifepristone and Misoprostol—both of which are used for safe, effective medication



abortion—are FDA approved and send fewer people to the ER than Tylenol or Viagra. Ohioans can go to [www.PlanCPills.com](http://www.PlanCPills.com) to learn more about accessing these pills by mail—whether or not they’re currently pregnant. These pills are safe and effective for self-managing abortions.

In-clinic abortion access is also crucial to protect in expand as part of a comprehensive reproductive health landscape. If you are an Ohioan in need of financial or practical support accessing abortion—whether that’s getting transportation to & from clinics or covering the cost of childcare, doula support, and more—you can contact WHO/O by email at [help@womenhaveoptions.org](mailto:help@womenhaveoptions.org), by phone at 614-300-7811. You can also find more information about what our abortion fund can provide by going to our website—[www.womenhaveoptions.org/help](http://www.womenhaveoptions.org/help).

Thank you for the opportunity to provide Opponent Testimony on HB 598. Please feel free to contact us with any questions or concerns you may have.

