



Sarah Inskip, she/her
Opponent Testimony for House Bill 598
Ohio House Government Oversight Committee
Thursday, May 24, 2022

Chairman Wilkin, Vice-Chair Swearingen, Ranking Member Brown, and members of the House Government Oversight Committee, thank you for allowing me to provide written testimony in opposition to House Bill 598, the trigger abortion ban.

My name is Sarah Inskip, and I am the Ohio Policy and Movement Building Director with URGE: Unite for Reproductive and Gender Equity. URGE is a multi-state Reproductive Justice organization focused on engaging and mobilizing young, queer, transgender, and people of color in the South and Midwest. As a Reproductive Justice organization dedicated to gender equity, bodily autonomy, and the ability to parent children in safe and sustainable communities, URGE unequivocally opposes House Bill 598 and any other measure that seeks to push abortion access further out of reach for Ohioans.

Today this committee will hear from witnesses who are credentialed medical providers, aspiring medical students, brave abortion storytellers, and more. These witnesses will provide members with evidence-based research, medical best practices, and a glimpse into the lived experiences of people who have navigated countless restrictions and barriers to access the abortion care they needed. As it has been done with all other abortion-related hearings, politicians on this committee will attempt to make this an ideological debate, weaponize their superficial religiosity, and spew inflammatory, stigmatizing, and inaccurate claims about how abortion care works, the people who provide them, and those who have them. We know this because for years we have shown up and lifted our voices, our values, and expertise in this legislature as it has waged its dangerous war to outlaw abortion and strip Ohioans of our bodily autonomy.

This has always been anti-abortion extremists' end game – to completely ban all abortion care, without exceptions, and to criminalize abortion providers. With the anticipated United States Supreme Court's decision to overturn *Roe v. Wade*, which could be released any day, and the passage of House Bill 598, Ohio will be the next state to make this end game a reality for millions of more people in our state. Because the truth is, the constitutionally protected right to abortion has never been enough for low-income and marginalized people in need of abortion services. In Ohio, where more than 30 abortion restrictions have passed into law since 2011, the financial and logistical barriers individuals face while trying to access essential health care are immense. For years, Ohioans have had to travel out of state, take time off of work, and arrange caregiving support for their families. According to research from the Ohio Policy Evaluation Network (OPEN), completely banning abortion in Ohio could force more than 2.2 million Ohioans to travel out of state for abortion care, driving an average distance of 157 miles to states like Michigan and Pennsylvania to obtain care.¹ This situation will continue to fall

¹ Chakraborty, P, Murawsky, S, Smith, MH, McGowan, ML, Norris, AH, Bessett, D. How Ohio's proposed abortion bans would impact travel distance to access abortion care. *Perspect Sex Reprod Health*. 2022; 1- 10. doi:[10.1363/psrh.12191](https://doi.org/10.1363/psrh.12191)



hardest on people who already face discriminatory obstacles to health care—particularly Black, Indigenous, and other people of color, people with disabilities, people in rural areas, young people, and undocumented people.

Whether it is access to abortion or having the basic resources and support to raise a healthy family in safe communities, these policy decisions (or lack thereof), have created a crisis in our state. This comes at a time when the United States is experiencing an unprecedented infant formula shortage that has left millions of low-income and families of color without food. Where there remain no national or state-based policies for paid family or medical leave for working-class families. And when Ohio ranks 42 out of 50 states in 2021 for having the highest rates of infant mortality² and in the bottom ten percent in the United States in child welfare outcomes³ – the implications of forcing more Ohioans to carry pregnancies are not only cruel but can further exacerbate these conditions. These are just a few of the urgent policy issues that the supermajority in this legislature should be focusing their efforts on instead of recklessly banning essential health care services like abortion services and gender-affirming care for transgender young people.

While legislators failed to act when reproductive health, rights, and Justice partners repeatedly warned that this would happen well over a year ago – the state’s abortion clinics, abortion funds, attorneys, mutual aid networks, and advocates have been tirelessly preparing for this moment. Right now, what Ohioans in every corner and pocket of the state need to know is that today abortion is still legal and accessible in the state. If you or someone you know needs financial or logistical assistance reach out to the only statewide abortion fund, Women Have Options Ohio. Visit and share AbortionPillInfo.org and ReproLegalHotline.org for more information on the safety and efficacy of self-managed abortion.

Every day Ohioans will continue to take care of each other and ensure folks who need essential health care services such as abortion care can access them one way or another. We will never stop in our pursuit for a future in Ohio where everyone has unfettered access to abortion care, where there are new leaders in this legislature and laws that support us, and a culture where our decisions are met with dignity and support. With that, I urge this committee to vote not on House Bill 598 and any other measure that seeks to push abortion care out of reach for the people of this state and am happy to answer any questions members have. Thank you.

² Young, Daniel. Ohio Maternal and Child Factsheet. National Health Law Program. https://healthlaw.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/02/Ohio-MCH-Fact-Sheet_Publication.pdf. Published February 2021.

³ Children’s Defense Fund. Measuring Transformation & Elevating Youth Voice in Child Welfare Report. <https://www.cdfohio.org/wp-content/uploads/sites/6/2022/03/Measuring-Transformation-Report-Final.pdf>. Published April 2022.