

Members of the Ohio House Health Committee thank you for allowing me to testify today. My name is Sarah Dobney. I am public health professional, a teacher, a medical writer, a mom to a beautiful 4-year-old daughter, and someone who has had an abortion. And I am strongly opposed to House Bill 598.

Along with the many things mentioned above, I am also a mother who has experienced the loss of a child. My daughter is a twin and at the 20-week ultrasound of my first pregnancy, my husband and I found out that our son had anencephaly and would not survive past birth. Given the circumstances (including the timing of this discovery), our only option in Ohio was to proceed with the pregnancy and hope to see our son born alive and spend as much time with him as we could. He lived for 90 minutes. A day that was the happiest we had experienced was also the saddest. Following release from the hospital, we had the monumental task of grieving our loss and traversing the path as new parents. The paperwork that we had to fill out and the preparation we made for a small ceremony in remembrance of our son's short life is something that I don't wish on any parent. With the help of the hospital, we were able to transfer our son's body to Nationwide Children's Hospital where tissue samples and pictures were taken (and an autopsy was performed) for scientific purpose. He was then transferred to the funeral home of our choice and cremated in accordance with our wishes.

Fast forward 4 months and we were happily pregnant again with our rainbow baby. Following numerous ultrasounds, we found out that our second son had multiple issues that gave him very little chance of surviving past birth (unbalanced atrioventricular canal defect). We were fortunate enough this pregnancy to be able to make our own decision as a family as to whether or not to proceed with the pregnancy. Following consultation with many doctors (including those at Nationwide Children's Hospital), we decided to access abortion services through Planned Parenthood. This decision was not easy but I am grateful that we had the option and am thankful every day for Planned Parenthood.

Had I had to birth my third child, I would have been destined to a life between raising a young baby at home while taking care of another one in the NICU (as this would have been the fate of my young son). Given his heart condition he would have lived at the hospital while undergoing multiple surgical procedures in hopes of living 6 months (the previous longevity of the others with this condition). As a working mom, I would have been destined to take FMLA and my vacation and hinder my coworkers with taking on my work while I was in between locations. I would also have hindered my family as I would have left my husband (or vice versa) to take care of our son in the hospital. Our daughter would have ultimately suffer because she would not have both of her parents and not have the attention of either.

Given these issues, I would have been so lucky to have this treatment covered by insurance. However, that does not mean that my family wouldn't have taken on the insurmountable debt of having a baby in the NICU for the first 6 months of his life. This financial strain would have possibly caused issues within my family and marriage and would have caused unnecessary emotional strain on all important relationships.

This law would remove the ability of families to make any decisions regarding their family when faced with the very difficult decisions of having children with issues incompatible with life (usually realized after 12 weeks). I know that many of you have been so lucky and never had to go through this but as someone that has I would like for you to take a look at the situation from my point of view. I don't think that many would be as strong to make these monumentally difficult decisions for the best of their family. But if SB123 goes into law no one will have to make this decision. Families will just have to go through with having a child whose condition is incompatible with life. Women will have to have babies

that they don't want to or can't mother. The mental instability that will be caused by this legislation are not realized at this point and I don't want to live in a state where they are.

I ask you to consider my testimony and vote NO on this harmful bill. Thank you again for the opportunity to testify. I will now take any questions you may have.