

Chairman Roegner, Vice Chair McColley, Ranking Member Craig, and members of the Ohio Senate Government Oversight and Reform Committee, thank you for allowing me the opportunity to present testimony in opposition to Senate Bill 157. My name is Lauren Blauvelt-Copelin, and I am the Vice President of Government Affairs and Public Advocacy for Planned Parenthood Advocates of Ohio.

I want to be clear— the purpose of this bill is to create another opportunity to push a false and inflammatory narrative around abortion in this state. This bill is completely unnecessary. In fact, Ohio already has this type of law in statute.

Bills like these abandon facts to perpetuate myths and lies about abortion, the patients who receive this care, and the doctors who care for them. Doctors are already obligated to provide appropriate medical care in all situations. To suggest otherwise is false, offensive, and dangerous. It is not surprising that major health care organizations that represent thousands of clinicians, such as the American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists, the American College of Nurse-Midwives, and the Society for Maternal-Fetal Medicine, oppose bills like SB 157.

SB 157 is part of a national strategy to criminalize abortion providers and outlaw abortion. Anti-abortion politicians use these bogus "born alive" bills as messaging opportunities to push their inflammatory rhetoric and to create another platform to push more misinformation about reproductive health care and those who provide it. This is the consistent strategy of anti-abortion groups whose ultimate goal is to push abortion completely out of reach. Anti-abortion politicians in Ohio have already passed 30 abortion restrictions since 2011. This bill is just another tactic in their quest to make abortion completely inaccessible, or even illegal, in the state. Ohio deserves better from their elected leaders.

Legislators in Ohio should instead focus on increasing access to health care. Given Ohio's high rates of maternal and infant mortality, sexually transmitted infection, and opioid addiction, it is time to focus on increasing access to preventive care instead of restricting access to health care. During a devastating pandemic, anti-abortion politicians haven't expanded health care but have taken it from Ohioans.

No matter our skin color, where we live, or where we're from, we all want to get accessible health care that keeps us safe. But, Ohio Republican politicians have focused continuously on stripping Ohioans of the right to make health care decisions and access affordable care. Ohioans deserve legislators who make communities safe, not actively create laws to put their lives in danger.