

Testimony of Kristen Day, Executive Director of Democrats for Life of America
Ohio Senate Health Committee Hearing on S.B. 123
October 27, 2021

Good morning,

My name is Kristen Day and I am the executive director of Democrats For Life of America.

I represent over 21 million Democrats who believe that human life begins in the womb and is worthy of protection and support. As pro-life Democrats, we do oppose abortion but also support affordable child care, pre-K education, paid leave, and other supports for young families with children.

I am here to support SB 123, the Human Life Protection Act, and also issue a challenge to this Committee and particularly to my Democratic colleagues.

The Supreme Court is due to hear two abortion cases in the next few months. There is a real chance that the framework of *Roe v. Wade* could be altered or *Roe* could be overturned altogether. It is important to be prepared for that possibility.

SB 123 provides important protections for pre-born life; you have an opportunity to ensure that those lives, after birth, have ample support and opportunity to thrive.

In today's political climate, it is increasingly difficult to find areas of agreement. I would urge the Ohio legislature to find a way to prioritize pregnant women and their families.

I offer the following suggestions.

Several states, including Pennsylvania, Arkansas, Minnesota, and Texas have taken steps to fund programs that will help level the playing field for women who give birth, making it a viable choice to move forward with their education and career -- not to mention paying rent and eating meals -- after bearing a child. Regardless of what happens with SB 123 or *Roe*, Ohio can address critical issues now that will make those changes in law and precedent a non-issue, by working to create an infrastructure of support, empowerment, and independence for women facing an unexpected pregnancy. Since it takes a village to raise a child, let's help build the village, not burn it down. Then, working toward lowering the abortion rate can be an act of bipartisan cooperation. Make Ohio a leader, so that in the Buckeye State abortion would be considered an option only in the most extreme circumstances.

I am the mother of three and I know parenthood is not easy. I would encourage Ohio to look at programs in other states and create something even better for parents. This does not have to be a partisan issue. My Democratic colleagues,

you can lead this effort to support the most vulnerable - a preborn baby and the woman carrying that child.

Pennsylvania's Real Alternatives Program originated with Democratic Governor Bob Casey. He made it a priority for his state to address the needs of Pennsylvania families.

Some of the various supports provided by these programs include:

- Confidential counseling and mentoring
- Free pregnancy self-test kits
- Clothing, food, and furniture pantries
- Temporary shelter
- Pregnancy, childbirth, and parenting classes
- Referrals to other community agencies and medical resources
- Adoption information
- Assistance with education and career decisions
- Other related services necessary for the well-being of the mother and child

Texas just added an additional \$20 million to their Alternatives to Abortion Fund, bringing its funding up to \$100 million. Arkansas recently passed the Every Mother Matters Act (EMMA) to ensure that pregnant women are made aware of state and federal programs that provide resources and support.

Ohio's abortion rate has been stagnant, hovering around 20,000 per year for the last several years I challenge you, Ohio, to take leadership to lower abortion by ensuring every pregnant woman knows she has the support, resources, and opportunity to make a real choice. If we all work together to reduce abortion, we will also reduce polarization.