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HB214
Opponent Testimony
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Good morning, Chairman Burke, Ranking Minority Member Tavares, and the members of the Senate Health, Human Services, and Medicaid Committee. Thank you for hearing my testimony against House Bill 214.

I am Rev. Laura Young, and I am the mother of two wonderful, healthy, grown children, a boy and a girl, ages 24 and 21, and an ordained United Methodist Minister. I live in Westerville.

Since it seems that we women are compelled enough in this political climate to tell our personal stories in the hopes we might appeal to people's sense of compassion, I will tell you why I am particularly qualified to give my opinion on this bill. In addition to being a trained Protestant minister – yes, a progressive one – I have personally had an abortion. I never regretted that decision for a moment, and I felt nothing but relief following the procedure.

As a result of a birth control failure, I had an untimely and unwanted pregnancy when I was a junior in college. I had recently broken up with my boyfriend, a dental student, and I was headed to law school. I have no doubt that each of us was able to continue on with our lives and follow the path God would have us follow, partly thanks to the option I had. I had that procedure in a hospital, performed by my regular family OB-GYN who delivered two of my mother's children and one of my sister's children. It was part of the health care of my family, and I am thankful for it. The procedure was paid for by Blue Cross, Blue Shield of Michigan. I was not shamed for my choice, and I was safe. That's how things worked in 1988. Certainly not any more.

As someone who was a member of the College Republicans at the University of Michigan in the late-1980s, I seem to remember we stood for freedom for all people and fought against those who sought to over-regulate corporations or people. My idealistic college-aged self could not foresee my former party going so far away from my and my family's values, and yet here we are.

I was a stay-at-home mother for 9 years before I went to seminary to begin my second career. I had friends and family members raising special-needs children and, believe me, this is not something the state should be forcing on women. Even the

most high-functioning people with unlimited resources are sometimes stretched to the limit with a child who requires special care.

According to the Centers for Disease Control's website, "The medical costs for a child with Down syndrome were 12 to 13 times higher than a child without Down syndrome." (<https://www.cdc.gov/features/birthdefectscostly/index.html>)

When I was a pastor in an inner-city Columbus church, I saw a very poor family headed by an unemployed, single mother struggle with a child with special needs. The red tape they had to cut through and the hurdles they had to clear were too much for anyone, let alone someone with so many burdens. It was heartbreaking to witness. The state should not be in the business of making women's healthcare decisions.

Not all people of faith agree on when life begins, and neither do all United Methodists agree on abortion. But our social principles state that "Our belief in the sanctity of unborn human life makes us reluctant to approve abortion. But we are equally bound to respect the sacredness of the life and well-being of the mother and the unborn child." (United Methodist Book of Discipline, Para. 161J)

We must consider the well-being of grown women who are created by God with autonomy over their own bodies and imbued with the God-given ability to make choices in consultation with whomever we choose to confide in. We are not children who need the state to step in and make choices for us.

A friend of mine is an OB-GYN in the Columbus area. When I asked him what he thought about this bill, he told me, "The people making these laws should be in the room with me when I have to deliver the news to a couple that their pregnancy has an anomaly." As a doctor, he trusts his patients and has compassion for them. Likewise, my faith calls me to have compassion for people — not to judge them and tell them what to do with their lives.

God trusts women. I'm asking you to trust women to make these decisions in consultation with their doctor and their God.

Thank you for hearing my testimony. I am happy to answer any questions you might have.