

Rev. Vanessa Myers-Dudley Testimony for December 15, 2020
Ohio House Health Committee Hearing on Senate Bill 260

My name is Rev. Vanessa Myers-Dudley, and I am writing today to share testimony in **opposition to Senate Bill 260**. I am an ordained minister in the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) denomination, while also holding degrees in meteorology and geography. My training in all of these subjects leads me to place value in both ethical living and in an appreciation of the natural world through science — values that are not met in SB260.

As a person of faith, I believe everyone is created in God's image. Everyone has rights, and the people best suited to exercise rights in relation to pregnancy are the people who are carrying that pregnancy. Taking away the ability to obtain medical services through telemedicine like SB260 does strips away rights from pregnant persons — and my faith doesn't support that kind of manipulation and controlling influence.

As a person who values science, I trust the scientific process and the scientists, doctors, and nurses who have been well trained in doing applied research in their fields. I trust the geographers who have documented the unequal distribution of healthcare due to location and poverty. I trust the doctors and nurses who show that telemedicine is safe and improves their ability to offer healthcare. Voting yes on SB260 is a vote AGAINST scientific experts and peer-reviewed scientific facts.

I also oppose this bill due to personal health reasons. Birthing a child would be a death sentence for me, due to having dilated cardiomyopathy, a condition I will have for the rest of my life. I am concerned that taking away doctors' abilities to prescribe drugs for medical abortions through telemedicine will just be a first step toward limiting the use of telemedicine services in regard to women's reproductive healthcare. Having access to abortion options, birth control options, and other care is essential to me being able to live my best possible life.

Living in rural southern Ohio, access to specialized medical services is already lacking

and sometimes telemedicine is the only option available. While COVID continues to rage through Ohio and the United States, telemedicine allows me as a high-risk patient to stay home and stay safe. Taking away ANY aspect of telemedicine like SB260 does could literally be the death of me.

One of the lessons I preach throughout all of my sermons is the holistic doctrine of the Imago Dei — the understanding that all people are made in God’s image and, therefore, are deserving of love and agency. When we fail to recognize God in the people right in front of us and care for them, our society fails. When we use religious concepts to control others, we do more harm than good and ignore Jesus’ message of liberation for all people. When we ignore science and facts that say telemedicine access allows patients to connect more easily and affordably with doctors, we allow our personal motives to take away the rights of others to make their own decisions.

I write to you as a faith leader, a scientist, and a woman and urge you to vote NO on SB260 if you truly value the lives and health of all God’s children.

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