



TESTIMONY OF:
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Managing Director
Ohio Women's Public Policy Network

IN OPPOSITION TO:
Senate Bill 260
House Health Committee
December 15, 2020

Chairman Lipps, Vice-Chair Holmes, Ranking Member Boyd, and distinguished members of the House Health Committee, thank you for the opportunity to testify in opposition to Ohio Senate Bill 260.

My name is Erin Ryan and I serve as the Managing Director of the Ohio Women's Public Policy Network, a coalition of nearly 40 organizations working collaboratively to advocate for public policy solutions that build economic opportunity for women and their families.

We believe that the measure of success for our state and communities is in large part determined by the success of Ohio's women. Therefore, policymakers must advance public policies centered in equity, fairness, and justice that address the following issue areas:

1. Promoting an economic security agenda for women;
2. Ensuring fairness and opportunity in the workplace; and
3. Improving women's health and well-being

These shared goals shaped our interest in testifying today against Senate Bill 260, as the passage of this legislation stands in fundamental opposition to all three of our public policy interests, especially our goal to improve the health and wellbeing of women. Because we know that all women deserve the opportunity to lead economically secure, safe and healthy lives, **we strongly urge the committee to reject this dangerous bill.**

Since 2011, there have been more than 25 restrictions to reproductive health care and abortion access passed by the Ohio Legislature, contributing to the closure of half of all abortion providers in our state. These medically unnecessary and dangerous restrictions have chipped away at the accessibility and affordability of obtaining an abortion in Ohio, creating new hurdles

for women and pregnant people to access abortion care. These measures disproportionately affect women of color, low-income women, women living in rural areas, and young women.

With the passage of each new limitation, lawmakers have interfered directly with Ohioans' health care decisions, put women's health and lives at risk, and stigmatized abortion and the medical professionals who provide that care. Senate Bill 260, which would ban the use of telemedicine to access abortion care, is no exception, utilizing false claims of protecting patient safety and stigmatizing lies about abortion with the goal of cutting off access to this safe and essential health service.

As in-person contact has become limited during the COVID-19 pandemic, the medical community shifted to meet the demands of their patients, demonstrating the effectiveness, power, and innovation of telemedicine's use within several aspects of the healthcare field. Abortion is one such aspect of healthcare that can benefit immensely from telemedicine, and it is key to ensure that Ohioans can access care. The use of telemedicine can increase access to medication abortion care by alleviating barriers, including reducing the cost of medication abortion, particularly for rural Ohioans who face immense hurdles to accessing clinics that are close to them. According to recent information available from the Guttmacher Institute's research, 93 percent of Ohio counties had no clinics that provided abortions, and 56 percent of Ohio women lived in those counties. As remaining clinics in Ohio are based in urban areas, the research found that one in five Ohio women must travel more than 45 miles for abortion care.¹

By eliminating the ability to use telemedicine to access medication abortion care, the legislation would require many women and pregnant people living in rural parts of the state to spend more time, money, and resources to access care. For many people, these barriers may be insurmountable, creating unequal access to abortion and undermining the health, bodily autonomy, and economic stability of women in our state. Access to affordable abortion care is directly linked to women's educational attainment, workforce participation, and economic security. The inability to obtain an abortion, due to lack of access or lack of funds, hinders women's economic potential and can lead to long term economic consequences.

The Ohio Legislature should promote measures to expand access to health care, but Senate Bill 260 stands to move this goal in the wrong direction. Banning telemedicine for abortion care will ultimately strip away affordable and accessible abortion care for Ohioans and compromise the ability of medical providers to deliver safe and effective healthcare services to their patients. **We strongly urge the committee to reject the passage of Senate Bill 260.**

¹ The Guttmacher Institute. (2018). *State Facts About Abortion*. Retrieved, December 3, 2018, from <https://www.guttmacher.org/fact-sheet/state-facts-about-abortion-ohio>

Thank you again for the opportunity to testify. I am available to answer any questions today or by email at ryan@innovationohio.org.

Sincerely,

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