

Lauren Blauvelt-Copelin
Opponent Testimony
Senate Bill 23
Ohio Senate Health, Human Services and Medicaid Committee
Wednesday, February 26, 2019

Chairman Burke, Vice Chair Huffman, Ranking Member Antonio and members of the Senate Health Committee, thank you for allowing me the opportunity to present testimony in opposition to Senate Bill 23. My name is Lauren Blauvelt-Copelin, and I am the Vice President of Government Affairs and Public Advocacy for Planned Parenthood Advocates of Ohio.

Senate Bill 23 seeks to effectively ban abortion in Ohio by outlawing abortion at approximately six-weeks, which is before most women know that they are pregnant. However we all feel about abortion, a woman's health should drive important medical decisions – not political agendas. Throughout her pregnancy, a woman must be able to make her own decisions with the advice of the health care professional she trusts. This extreme and dangerous bill would prevent pregnant people from doing that. Furthermore, it would endanger women's health and lives by interfering with a medical provider's ability to treat a pregnant patient who is suffering from a medical condition because of the serious threat of prosecution.

It is critical that abortion remains a safe and legal medical procedure in Ohio for a woman to consider if and when she needs it. Limiting the options available to medical professionals is crippling to their ability to provide the highest standard of care, and it is dangerous for patients in Ohio. Banning abortion would not eliminate abortion in Ohio; it would just make it less safe, potentially putting pregnant people's health, lives, and families in jeopardy.

It is also deeply unpopular to ban abortion. Nearly three-quarters of Americans—72 percent—do not want to see *Roe v. Wade* overturned. This includes a majority of Democrats, Republicans, and Independents. Americans are much more united on this issue than divisive rhetoric would make it seem.

The right to access abortion is a public health imperative. When abortion is illegal or made inaccessible, women and their families suffer the consequences. States with more abortion restrictions tend to have poorer health outcomes for women and children than other states, specifically related to higher rates of maternal and infant mortality rates. Since 2011, 21 restrictions to reproductive health care and bans to abortion have become law in Ohio. Ohio has some of most alarming rates of maternal and infant mortality, ranking 32 in the country (Americans Health Rankings, 2018) and having 3 times higher rates of infant mortality for black infants than white infants (Ohio Department of Health, 2018). This is not a coincidence... In 2019, this is an unacceptable reality for the people of our state.

Planned Parenthood Advocates of Ohio

This legislation will exacerbate the public health crisis we're facing in the state and undoubtedly drain Ohio of medical talent. Students aspiring to be future medical providers will choose to attend schools outside of Ohio, in states where they can practice medicine without fear of prosecution. Young people and professionals won't want to start their lives and careers here – knowing that this state is in the race to the bottom of becoming the most hostile state in the nation for access to abortion and overall reproductive health.

Moreover, this bill is blatantly unconstitutional and a waste of taxpayer resources. Similar laws passed in other states have been struck down by federal courts as clear violations of the Constitution. Ohio will end up paying hundreds of thousands of dollars in taxpayer money to defend a law that does not stand a chance in court. Even those who oppose abortion view this as too extreme to waste our state resources defending it.

Time and time again, major medical organizations such as the American College of Obstetrics and Gynecologist, and the American Medical Association have affirmed that access to the full range of reproductive health care, including access to safe and legal abortion, is essential to a women's overall health and wellbeing.¹

That is why Planned Parenthood of Greater Ohio and Planned Parenthood Southwest Ohio Region proudly provide abortion as part of the full range of reproductive health care. Planned Parenthood health centers in Ohio also provide life-saving health care like breast and cervical cancer screenings, STI treatment and testing, HIV testing to 85,042 patients annually and medically accurate sex education programs served to more than forty thousand clients. Everyday people come through Planned Parenthood health center doors for those safe, reliable, confidential and judgment-free services.

The advocacy work we do at Planned Parenthood Advocates of Ohio is to protect the essential health services and education services Planned Parenthood of Greater Ohio and Planned Parenthood Southwest Ohio Region provide to communities and we are joined in support by 365,326 supporters committed to protecting reproductive health and rights across the state of Ohio.

It's time to stop criminalizing reproductive health care and interfering with the personal decisions of the people of Ohio. Instead let us bring our collective time, resources, and expertise to combat Ohio's infant and maternal health crisis. Let us invest in greater health care access and more comprehensive education so that all Ohioans, no matter their race, gender, or zip code can make engaged decisions about their personal health care and family planning.

I urge you to vote no on Senate Bill 23, the dangerous six-week abortion ban. Thank you for hearing my testimony and I welcome any questions you have for me.



206 East State Street
Columbus, OH 43215
p: 614.224.2235 · f: 614.224.2267
www.ppao.org

Planned Parenthood Advocates of Ohio

Sincerely,

Lauren Blauvelt-Copelin
Vice President of Government Affairs and Public Advocacy
Planned Parenthood Advocates of Ohio

Citations:

Br. of Amici Curiae ACOG, AMA, AAFP, AOA, & AAP in Supp. of Pet'rs at 4, *Whole Woman's Health v. Hellerstedt*, 136 S. CT 2292 (2016) (No. 15-724), 2016 WL 74948 at *4.