

Parvaneh Nouri
SB 23 – Six-Week Abortion Ban
Opponent Testimony
Ohio Senate Health, Human Services, and Medicaid Committee
February 26, 2019

Chairman Burke, Vice Chair Huffman, Ranking Member Antonio, and members of the Health, Human Services and Medicaid Committee,

Thank you for allowing me to testify in this committee again today. My name is Parvaneh Nouri and I am now a 4th year medical student at a public medical school in Ohio where I also recently received my Masters in Public Health. I also serve on the Board of Directors for the international nonprofit, Medical Students for Choice. I am a citizen of this state and a prospective resident physician of this state.

As a disclaimer, please note that my testimony here today is reflective of my own convictions, and not necessarily those of my institution. I am here today to provide testimony in opposition of Senate Bill 23, as a prospective resident physician of this state. From the medical perspective, I'd like to highlight how this bill is incredibly harmful - and I preface by saying it goes far beyond the ways in which this bill turns my colleagues, physicians skilled and dedicated to providing reproductive care to Ohioans everyday, into criminals:

The earliest time a fetal heartbeat *may* be detected is about 6 weeks, give or take a few days. Interestingly, this coincides with the same time many women first discover they are even pregnant at all. I can tell you by my own clinical experience at community hospitals, clinics, as well as serving our nations' bravest at the Air Force base that I did not encounter a single person who was able to confirm a positive pregnancy test before 6 weeks. By prohibiting abortions after this time, the number of Ohioans that will be *forced* to leave and seek abortion care in another state will undoubtedly increase. Further, for the *many* Ohioans who are marginalized by poverty, discrimination, or unsafe domestic situations, securing means of transportation, childcare for their already existing children, or merely the safety to leave for any period of time is just not possible. This bill would make an already extremely difficult situation, impossible for many.

What I find most troubling about this bill, how this bill is meticulously worded to facilitate harm-doing, is how it contains no exceptions for the cases of rape or incest - unimaginable traumas I certainly hope no one in this room has ever experienced nor ever will encounter. Having had patient survivors, as young as 7 years old, I can assure you the lack of due diligence to include such exceptions in an already problematic bill is horrifying.

Everyday, we healthcare professionals of this state battle an increasing maternal mortality rate coupled with an already alarmingly high infant mortality rate. We are tired of watching people die when put into situations that could have been prevented had we been enabled and supported by our government to provide our patients, our citizens, with safe, high quality, and comprehensive reproductive care. If instituted, this bill will increase the number of Ohioans dying every single year.

The American College of Obstetrics and Gynecology (otherwise known as ACOG), the body responsible for holding OB GYNs to professional and ethical standards of care released the following statement in regards to legislature that limits reproductive care:

“Access to reproductive services, including abortion care, is essential for millions of American [people]...By forcing [people] to carry pregnancies to term, regardless of their reasons for needing an abortion, these bans will compel high-risk [patients] to endanger their lives, increasing maternal mortality. At a time when maternal mortality is already on the rise in the United States, we should be working together to improve [patients’] health – not to attack it.”

As for what this means for medical students, residents, and already practicing physicians we make decisions on where we train, where we practice, and who we serve based on the restrictions placed on our ability to care for patients. For those of us who want to work together with our government to provide patients with comprehensive reproductive care, this bill quite simply means leaving this state. At present, Ohio is categorized as an “extremely hostile state” in regards to comprehensive reproductive care. This bill will undoubtedly cost Ohio countless qualified and compassionate care providers. And further, while this bill would criminalize an abortion provider, only a small subset of practicing physicians, it would attack the binding fellowship of all physicians.

I’ve said it before in this very room: Our healthcare system and government involvement have the *great* potential of operating as a mutual partnership; one that facilitates positive patient outcomes and preserves our global leadership in the highest standard of care. As a physician, I want to serve my patients under that standard of care, regardless of which state I practice in.

On behalf of the well-being of all Ohioans, I urge you to strongly consider my testimony and vote NO on this bill. I urge you to consider the health of our citizens and of Ohio families that rely on you to protect them.

Thank you for your time and attention.

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