



**Jordyn Close**  
**Opponent Testimony for Senate for Senate Bill 155**  
**Ohio Senate Health, Human Services, and Medicaid Committee**  
**Tuesday, November 5, 2019**

Good morning, Chairman Burke, Vice-Chair Huffman, Ranking Member Antonio, and members of the Senate Health, Human Services, and Medicaid Committee thank you for allowing me to testify in opposition to Senate Bill 155.

My name is Jordyn Close. I am the State Coordinator with URGE: Unite for Reproductive and Gender Equity, I am a storyteller with Youth Testify, a leadership program of the National Network of Abortion Funds and Advocates for Youth, I serve on the board of Women Have Options-Ohio, an abortion fund. I have also had an abortion.

When I was 18, I found out I was pregnant when I was 7 or 8 weeks along. I knew immediately that choosing to end my pregnancy was the right decision for me. At the time I was living in Logan County. I was surrounded by messages telling me that abortion was wrong. There was little-to-no compassion for any decision to have an abortion, let alone just not wanting to be pregnant.

Every time another anti-abortion bill is introduced, supporters of legislation use dangerous and inflammatory rhetoric to mischaracterize and flat out lie about how abortion care actually works. Senate Bill 155 would be state-sponsored experimentation that would disproportionately harm Black communities and other people of color. Reproductive and sexual health care policy must be addressed with an intersectional and historical lens and acknowledgment that Black bodies, specifically Black women's bodies, have been subjected to violence, exploitation, and experimentation<sup>1</sup>. Politicians are not doctors and have no business mandating potentially dangerous, unproven, and experimental procedures on pregnant people in Ohio. As a Black woman and Ohio native, I am appalled that this committee is considering such a baseless bill and would use it to deny me of my right to access safe and affordable health care like abortion.

Fortunately, when I needed an abortion, I was able to get one. We hadn't lost half of the clinics in the state at that point. I found the nearest clinic in Columbus; it was called Founders, a little over an hour away from my home.

When I got there, I was completely surprised by the level of compassion and care that the clinic staff provided. From the woman at the front desk, to the nurses that took care of me afterward, their kindness and support reaffirmed the choice that I already knew was right for me.

The most memorable parts of my experience was everyone who was in the waiting room with me. I had never been around people so willing to openly share their stories. Their real life,



human stories without their experiences being used as political pawns and weaponized against them and their communities.

In the past, I have been hesitant to tell my story so publicly because to me it seems to pale in comparison to other stories I have heard and the lengths those people had to go through to receive basic health care. Transportation, raising money, emotional support, time off of work, are created and enhanced by the burdens placed on us due to legislation like this. I did have to wait a few weeks to get an abortion. A bill like Senate Bill 155, on top of the countless targeted regulations against abortion providers, otherwise known as TRAP laws, and extreme abortion bans that have been enacted in our state, will create real barriers for people accessing care. These restrictions also – with intention – shame and stigmatize the decision to have an abortion.

When the abortion ban (then House Bill 493) was introduced in 2016, I went public with my story for the first time on Facebook. I had to. Since then, I have been very outspoken about my abortion and share my story with the hope that other Black, Brown, queer, and trans young people know they are not alone. That they know that abortion is normal and is an essential part of the full range of reproductive health care. We deserve dignity, respect, and autonomy to make the best decisions for ourselves – without political interference or shame.

Spreading lies and stigma will not stop people from needing abortion care. Ohioans should be able to trust their doctor to provide them accurate, evidence based, and scientifically proven information about their health care options. Senate Bill 155 would do none of this. The Ohio Legislature should be protecting our constitutional rights and supporting our health, not regularly supporting and passing laws that undermine them. Every single one of you listening to my testimony loves someone who had an abortion, although you may not know it yet.

I never wavered in my decision. I never questioned what was right for me. I am happy with the decision I made. I will shout it from the rooftops if necessary. I will never regret my decision to have an abortion. Abortion is necessary. Abortion is health care.

I ask you to vote no on Senate Bill 155, and I'm happy to answer any questions you have.

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<sup>1</sup> Prather, Cynthia et al. "Racism, African American Women, and Their Sexual and Reproductive Health: A Review of Historical and Contemporary Evidence and Implications for Health Equity." *Health equity* vol. 2,1 249-259. 24 Sep. 2018, doi:10.1089/heap.2017.0045