

**Lauren Blauvelt-Copelin**  
**Senate Bill 260 – Telemedicine Abortion Ban**  
**Opponent Testimony**  
**Ohio Senate Health, Human Services, and Medicaid Committee**  
**February 26, 2020**

Chairman Burke, Vice Chair Huffman, Ranking Member Antonio, and members of the Ohio Senate Health, Human Services, and Medicaid Committee, thank you for allowing me the opportunity to present testimony in opposition to Senate Bill 260.

My name is Lauren Blauvelt-Copelin, and I am the Vice President of Government Affairs and Public Advocacy for Planned Parenthood Advocates of Ohio.

Planned Parenthood is the largest nationwide reproductive health care provider. Planned Parenthood has been a trusted provider for over 100 years. With patient experience and a strong commitment to quality and safety, Planned Parenthood continues to lead in advancing reproductive service delivery across the country and here in Ohio. Patients trust our nonjudgmental services and to give them unbiased information. We work every day to make sure people receive safe, high quality health care they need.

As a health care provider that counsels patients every day on their health and well-being, Planned Parenthood knows that we need to respect every patient's ability to make deeply personal decisions about whether or not to have an abortion, together with their family and doctor. It is not our place to judge what any patient should do.

Telemedicine is the use of medical information exchanged from one site to another using electronic communications to improve a patient's clinical health status. The use of telemedicine has been rapidly expanding in recent years, but it has been in use for over four decades. Patients have benefitted from the use of telemedicine for many different types of medical treatment, including management of chronic disease, psychiatry and even neurology. Studies have shown that telemedicine improves both patient outcomes and patient satisfaction and reduces the costs of medical care. The ability of telemedicine to increase access to health care for patients living in remote areas is particularly important given the significant health disparities that exist between patients living in rural and urban communities.

Like many other medical services, telemedicine can be used to safely and effectively provide medication abortion and for nearly two years, Planned Parenthood in Ohio has used telemedicine to do so, safely and successfully serving hundreds of Ohioans. Medication abortion is a method of terminating a pregnancy that does not require a surgical procedure and is used during early pregnancy. Under this method, the patient takes two different types of medications, generally forty-eight hours apart. Medication abortion is one of the safest procedures in contemporary medical practice. Major

complications from medication abortion are extremely rare, and far rarer than those associated with pregnancy and childbirth.

Despite multiple studies and years of experience proving that using telemedicine for medication abortion is incredibly safe and effective, Senate Bill 260 would criminalize physicians who use telemedicine to provide their patients with abortion medications. This would cut off access to safe, legal abortion for patients, many of whom already have difficulty accessing a provider. As the number of abortion restrictions in Ohio skyrockets and the number of providers falls, more and more people live farther from fewer providers, leading to longer wait times and the need for additional appointment opportunities, which telemedicine is currently able to provide. No matter where a person lives, they should be able to access safe, quality healthcare.

The truth is, this is part of a broader effort to restrict or end access to safe, legal abortion and is not based on safety concerns. If this was really about improving patient safety, then we would not have eight other bills restricting abortion moving in the general assembly and targeting abortion-providing clinicians. We know that the real aim of this bill is yet again to restrict a patient's right to make personal medical decisions.

Bans like Senate Bill 260 also disproportionately create additional barriers for communities already struggling to access the health care they need. Safe, legal abortion is already difficult to access for too many Ohioans, particularly for Black and Brown people, LGBTQ+ individuals, people with low incomes, and individuals living in remote areas.

The goal of Senate Bill 260, is not better health care for Ohioans or patient safety, its sole purpose is to push access to safe, legal abortion further out of reach and against the will of the majority of Ohioans. Studies have shown that 8 in 10 Americans agree that abortion should be safe, legal, and accessible. People should be able to access safe, quality abortion no matter who they are or where they live. Ohio legislators should not be in the business of taking away health care from its citizens, and instead focus on expanding access to reproductive health care.

This bill is yet another unconstitutional ban crafted with the intent to limit access to safe, legal abortion and it could lead to more litigation in Ohio. In Idaho, Planned Parenthood challenged a similar ban in 2017, which ultimately led to the legislature repealing the provision. The Iowa Supreme Court declared a ban on telemedicine abortions to be unconstitutional in 2015 because of the lack of medical support for prohibiting it, noting that the state Board of Medicine's concerns about telemedicine "are selectively limited to abortion." Challenges against similar laws are pending in Arizona, Oklahoma, Wisconsin, Kansas, and Texas. Continuously passing unconstitutional bans on abortion is not only drastically affecting people's lives, but is an irresponsible waste of taxpayer money.

No matter where someone lives, they should be able to access safe, quality health care. Ohio legislators should be focusing on expanding access to reproductive health care, not further restricting it.

I urge you to vote no on Senate Bill 260, another dangerous abortion ban. Thank you for hearing my testimony and I welcome any questions you have for me.