December 20, 2016

Dear Governor Kasich,

We, the undersigned national and state faith-based and religious groups, stand united across our faith traditions in opposing measures that restrict women’s access to safe, legal abortion. Two bills that recently came before you after passing the Ohio legislature, HB 493 and SB 127, sought to ban abortion after six and 20 weeks, respectively. While we were pleased to see you veto HB 493, we are extremely disappointed that you signed SB 127.

This is an egregious law that stands in the way of a woman’s ability to make conscience-based decisions about her pregnancy according to her own beliefs, and instead allows politicians to decide when and whether a woman can access abortion care. The decision to end a pregnancy must be left to an individual woman in consultation with her family, doctors and any others she chooses to involve, in accordance with her personal faith beliefs and circumstances, rather than being imposed on her by state law.

Bans on abortion after an arbitrary gestational limit—whether six weeks, 20 weeks, or any other number of weeks—fail to consider the medical and personal circumstances of the woman. Indeed, when a woman is denied an abortion later in pregnancy, the consequences on her life and her family can be far-reaching, impacting her health, economic security and well-being. Healthcare that does not include access to later abortion does not serve the economic, medical or emotional needs of women or our society as a whole.

Our faith charges us to respect the freedom of belief, a core principle of our American democracy. However, legislation such as SB 127 that limits access to abortion care has the practical effect of imposing one particular religious belief on all people, which does not reflect the religious freedom protections that are guaranteed to every individual by the Constitution.

The proper role of government in the United States is not to privilege one set of religious views over others, but to protect each person’s right and ability to make decisions according to their own beliefs and values.

The religious values that guide our organizations call us to demonstrate compassion, support and respect for any woman or family facing critical decisions related to pregnancy. As a woman makes this decision for herself and her family, we believe that it is neither our role—nor the government’s—to stand in judgment. Only she can know the circumstances of her life well enough to make the best decision for her health, her family and her life. Our lawmakers must ensure that she has safe and legal access to the care she feels is necessary. Each woman is a moral agent who deserves dignity and respect. It is critical that every woman has as much time as she needs to make the best decision for herself and her family in consultation with her doctor and without the fear of arbitrary time restrictions.

Our religious values compel us to advocate for policies that empower those marginalized in our communities. Whenever bans or other severe restrictions to abortion are enacted, those most negatively affected are women without the financial resources to access safe care elsewhere. We stand with women who will be disproportionately harmed by abortion bans. We understand that abortion bans like SB 127 only compound the difficulties of families in our communities who are already struggling to make ends meet.
Again, we express our disappointment that you signed SB 127, an extreme law that will neither withstand constitutional scrutiny nor protect the health of Ohio women. This law blocks a woman’s access to safe healthcare options and unjustly denies her the freedom to make decisions according to her own beliefs and conscience, and in consultation with her doctor. In the future, rather than question the autonomy of the women of Ohio, we hope that you support policies that show compassion for women and families, no matter their circumstances, and respect for every individual’s religious liberty.

In faith,


For more information please contact Kate Parke, Catholics for Choice, at kparke@catholicsforchoice.org or (202) 986-6093, or Laura Young, Ohio Religious Coalition for Reproductive Choice at ohiorcrc@sbcglobal.net or (614) 943-3939.