

# 41 National and State Faith-Based and Religious Groups Stand in Opposition to Governor Kasich's Signing of SB 127

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,

A Critical Mass: Women Celebrating Eucharist  
Advocacy Committee for Women's Concerns of the  
Presbyterian Church (USA)  
Anti-Defamation League  
Bend the Arc Jewish Action  
Catholics for Choice  
Central Conference of American Rabbis  
Clergy Advocacy Board of Planned Parenthood  
Federation of America  
Cleveland Section, National Council of Jewish Women  
Columbus Section, National Council of Jewish Women  
Concerned Clergy for Choice  
CORPUS  
Disciples for Choice  
Disciples Justice Action Network  
Episcopal Women's Caucus  
Global Justice Institute  
Hadassah, The Women's Zionist Organization  
of America, Inc.  
Jewish Alliance for Law and Social Action  
Jewish Council for Public Affairs  
Jewish Women International  
Keshet  
Methodist Federation for Social Action  
Metropolitan Community Churches (MCC)

Muslims for Progressive Values  
National Coalition of American Nuns (NCAN)  
National Council of Jewish Women  
Ohio Religious Coalition for Reproductive Choice  
Ohio State Policy Advocates, National Council of  
Jewish Women  
Presbyterian Feminist Agenda Network  
Presbyterian Voices for Justice  
Reconstructionist Rabbinical College and Jewish  
Reconstructionist Communities  
Religious Coalition for Reproductive Choice  
Religious Institute  
Society for Humanistic Judaism  
Union for Reform Judaism  
Unitarian Universalist Association  
Unitarian Universalist Women's Federation  
United Church of Christ, Justice and Witness Ministries  
Women's Alliance for Theology, Ethics, and Ritual (WATER)  
Women's Ordination Conference  
Women's League for Conservative Judaism  
Women of Reform Judaism

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