



**Testimony on House Bill 125
Before the House Health and Aging Committee
The Hon. Lynn Wachtmann, Chair
By Karen Rainey, AAUW/Ohio Public Policy Advocate
March 9, 2011**

Chairman Wachtmann and members of the committee:

My name is Karen Rainey, and I am speaking for AAUW/Ohio (the American Association of University Women), representing more than 1,500 members in 50 branches throughout Ohio. AAUW members initiated support for the legalization of abortion in 1971. The protection of reproductive rights has been an organizational policy principle since 1977.

Since the 1973 U.S. Supreme Court's ruling in *Roe v. Wade*, legalized abortion has been a constitutionally protected fundamental right. In real terms, this means that all women have access to a full range of reproductive health and family planning options. The *Roe v. Wade* ruling did not give states the prerogative to restrict access to abortion during the first trimester.

House Bill 125 would unconstitutionally restrict abortion access during this first trimester. At this point in time, no fetus is viable at such an early stage of development. Increasing restrictions would deny many of the most vulnerable groups of women in our state fundamental control of their reproductive lives.

An additional argument against this bill is that, in a time of economic hardship and severe budget cuts, the State of Ohio would be saddled with the costs of defending the bill, because it is practically guaranteed that it will be challenged in court.

There are many positive things that can be done to cut down the number of unintended pregnancies. These include increased access to pregnancy prevention programs and to emergency contraception and comprehensive sex education. It would be far better for this committee to be an advocate **for** better reproductive health care and family planning services than to be against access to abortion.

AAUW members care about human life, yes, but we also care about the quality of life. We care that the babies who are born grow up in safe, loving environments—that they have enough to eat, that they live in a decent home, that they have a good education. When the economic situation means that adoption subsidies are cut, that homelessness among children is growing, that day care assistance is drying up, that reproductive health care loses funding and that jobs are nonexistent, then we don't see the compassion in forcing a woman to carry an unwanted child. Pregnancy should not be a punishment.

We respectfully ask that you vote against this bill.

AAUW advances equity for women and girls through advocacy, education, philanthropy and research. AAUW, founded in 1881, is open to all graduates who hold an associate or higher degree from a regionally accredited college or university. In principle and practice, AAUW values and seeks a diverse membership.