



**Testimony on House Bill 78, Post-Viability Abortions
Submitted to the Senate Health, Human Services and Aging Committee
The Hon. Scott Oelslager, Chair
By Karen Rainey, AAUW/Ohio Public Policy Advocate
July 13, 2011**

Chairman Oelslager and members of the committee:

My name is Karen Rainey, and I represent AAUW/Ohio (the American Association of University Women), with more than 1,500 members in 50 branches throughout Ohio and 100,000 members nationwide. AAUW members initiated support for the legalization of abortion in 1971, predating *Roe v. Wade*. The protection of reproductive rights, including safe, accessible, affordable, and comprehensive family planning and reproductive health services, 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 order to effectively exercise their right to choose, all women should have access to a full range of reproductive health and family planning options. Unfortunately, increasing restrictions work to deny women control of their reproductive lives.

House Bill 78 would allow a post-viability abortion if the unborn child is not viable, or if the abortion is necessary to prevent the death of the pregnant woman or if there is a serious risk of impairment of a major bodily function. It does not, however, make an exception for the mental health of the woman. This is a serious flaw; any definition of health must include mental health. Serious mental illness must be viewed in the same way as serious physical health issues, and can cause similar levels of risk to both mother and child. Additionally, the bill makes no exceptions for pregnancies resulting from rape or incest, or for fetal abnormalities. For the women whose pregnancies are related to such conditions, this bill turns pregnancy into a punishment rather than a joyous experience. This proposed legislation has the potential to force women to endure untenable hardships without the ideal outcomes that are apparently envisioned.

AAUW members would much prefer that this committee be an advocate for better reproductive health care and family planning services rather than pursue this bill. Increased access to pregnancy prevention programs and to emergency contraception and comprehensive sex education will go far in preventing the number of unintended pregnancies.

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.