

Testimony in support of HB2002  
Rabbi Rachel L. Joseph  
Congregation Beth Israel, Portland, Oregon

Chair Nosse, Vice Chairs Goodwin and Nelson, and members of the committee,

Good afternoon, my name is Rabbi Rachel Joseph from Congregation Beth Israel in Portland, Oregon. Congregation Beth Israel is the oldest and largest synagogue in the state of Oregon. I also serve on the boards of Planned Parenthood Columbia Willamette and Planned Parenthood Advocates of Oregon. I am here today in strong support of HB2002. As a person of faith, I believe, unequivocally, in bodily autonomy, reproductive health care and access to abortion. It is a matter of religious liberty and a moral imperative. My religious advocacy around reproductive rights, and access to healthcare is grounded in a careful reading of our sacred and holy texts and tradition. The *Torah*, the Hebrew bible, teaches that everyone is created *b'tzelem elohim*, in the image of God, and therefore each individual body is sacred and holy. Each individual body is autonomous and no one should be allowed to interfere with my sacred right to self-determination.

In my role as a religious leader, I counsel pregnant people around abortion. I counsel people around gender affirming care. Congregants look to me for support and guidance. And I am so grateful to live in a state where I can exercise my religious freedom without fear and worry of being harassed or sued.

In my own experience, I had an emergency c-section with my youngest child because the baby's heart stopped beating. It was 28 minutes from the time I checked into the hospital in Northern Kentucky to being rushed to the operating table. It was very scary, to say the least. Both of our lives were in danger. I pleaded with everyone in the operating room: please, please, save me. We're Jewish, we believe my life is worth saving first. The response: we are a catholic facility and our priority is the baby. Thankfully, we are both okay. Max is a healthy, sullen-pre teen, but in that moment, access to lifesaving healthcare and the right to have an abortion became personal.

No one experiencing pregnancy should have to endure what I did. As a person of faith, I'm supporting HB 2002 because everyone deserves access to high quality health care — no matter who we are, where we live, or how much money we make. It's a matter of religious liberty and a moral imperative.

Thank you.



