

## Danielle Edwards Testimony RHEA

Mr. Chair, Members of the committee, thank you for the opportunity to testify in front of all of you today. My name is Danielle Edwards and I am an Organizational and Social Psychologist, and current second-year law student at The University of Colorado.

I am here today as a member of the Colorado Women's Bar Association in support of the Reproductive Health and Equity Act. This act is a **vital and necessary** step to ensure that the rights of women and child-bearing persons in Colorado are protected for years to come.

Colorado has a long history of protecting women's rights. One might think that because of this history, that we are immune from the tidal wave of anti-abortion legislation sweeping our country. While some have argued that this bill has been drawn in haste, **haste is exactly what is required**.

In the last week alone, numerous states have brought forth bills seeking to eradicate access to abortion.

Let me be clear. Most women do not follow the intricate details of the law; they are not concerned with what a political activist three states away wants to force them to do. Most will never read this bill. They are concerned with their careers, their children, their family, and with the demands of providing for their loved ones. They make difficult choices every day; complex choices that involve balancing a number of competing demands.

But what do Colorado women rely on?

They rely on the long history of Colorado legislators and Colorado voters protecting and providing a system of laws that gives them the opportunity to actually make those difficult choices.

This bill takes **no position** on whether a pregnancy should proceed or be terminated. But it does reaffirm and protect right and ability of a women to make that most difficult decision unencumbered by the clumsy power of the state.

The rights of women and pregnant persons is on the line. They deserve *choice*.

I am a survivor of sexual assault. To have your body violated by another human being is, frankly, indescribable. To lose *choice* over your own body, your sense of self, your personhood, is a type of pain that has taken me years to process.

This bill in front of you today is not about sexual assault, but it does have an impact for individuals, like me, who didn't have choice, to reclaim their bodily autonomy.

We deserve *choice*.

Thank you. I ask you, on behalf of the Colorado Women's Bar Association that you support HB 1279. Thank you for listening to my testimony I would be happy to answer any questions.