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Agudath  
Israel  
of America  
אגודת ישראל באמריקה

Rabbi Yitz Frank  
Ohio Director

December 13, 2016

The Honorable John R. Kasich  
Governor of Ohio  
77 S. High Street, 30<sup>th</sup> Floor  
Columbus, OH 43215

Dear Governor Kasich,

As you consider House Bill 493 and Senate Bill 127, two measures recently passed by the Ohio General Assembly restricting abortion, we are compelled to provide the view of Jewish law on this sensitive issue.

Jewish tradition teaches that a human fetus has status and dignity; and that termination of pregnancy raises profound moral concerns. Agudath Israel of America has accordingly urged the United States Supreme Court to reconsider its holding in *Roe v. Wade*, and is supportive of legislation that limits abortion on demand. At the same time, in line with its support for religious freedom, Agudath Israel opposes initiatives that would prohibit abortion even in situations where termination of pregnancy is directed by religious law -- as it is, for example, for people of the Jewish faith when the pregnancy endangers the life of the mother.

We commend the efforts of the Ohio General Assembly to protect the sanctity of life. However, in the context of the present legislation, there is no exception made for instances when an abortion is directed by the teachings and traditions of the mother's religion. For practitioners of the Jewish faith, that exception would include where the pregnancy poses a risk to the life of the mother (and perhaps, in certain instances, even when it poses a grave danger to her physical or mental health).

In light of these concerns, we cannot support the present legislation.

Respectfully,

Rabbi Eric "Yitz" Frank

*Agudath Israel of America, founded in 1922, is a national Orthodox Jewish grassroots organization with an active constituency in Ohio. Among its other functions and activities, Agudath Israel articulates and advances the position of the Orthodox Jewish community on a broad range of legal issues affecting religious rights and liberties in the United States*

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