

My name is Annie Williams and I, along with other women across Illinois, organized silent protests wearing the red capes and white bonnets inspired by the characters in Margaret Atwood's novel and Emmy award winning series, "The Handmaid's Tale. The Handmaid's Tale describes a horrifying future where a coup by religious extremist groups have taken over the United States and established a regime called the Republic of Gilead where human rights are severely limited and women's roles are strictly regulated. The Handmaids are one of a class of women whose sole role in this authoritarian society is to bear children. You can't help but notice the similarities between The Handmaid's Tale and our current political climate with the unprecedented attack on reproductive health care access. Women are reduced to being simply a vessel and it seems that a pregnancy has more rights than a woman.

The Illinois Handmaids began daily vigils at the Capitol in Springfield beginning in April and continued to bear witness in the Illinois General Assembly throughout the Spring Session, never missing a day of session. We demonstrated in what we thought at the time was the largest gathering of Handmaids in Springfield on May 15, Reproductive Rights Lobby Day, only to exceed that record in Chicago on May 20, the nation-wide Reproductive Rights Day of Action.

THE ILLINOIS HANDMAIDS

**Illinois State Capitol, Springfield
May 15, 2019**



**Federal Plaza, Chicago
May 20, 2019**



The Handmaids message was this; Illinois legislators must pass the Reproductive Health Act (RHA). With the unprecedented attack on reproductive freedom happening in states throughout our country and where legislators seem intent on creating a real life Gilead, the RHA is all that stands between the women of Illinois and anti-choice extremists wanting to ban safe, legal abortion.

**Record of Committee Witness
Written Testimony**

**Resolution 19-3758
June 5, 2019**

The Handmaids watched as the General Assembly, first in the House by a vote of 65-40 and then with a Senate vote of 34-20, fulfilled the mandate to protect reproductive rights for all Illinois women and passed the RHA.



The Illinois Handmaids would like to thank the Cook County Board of Commissioners for introducing Resolution 19-3758, on May 23, 2019, urging the Illinois General Assembly to support the RHA. The Board now has the opportunity to be on the right side of history and join the Illinois General Assembly in proclaiming that Illinois women have the fundamental right to make individual decisions about reproductive health care, including contraception, abortion, and maternity care. Please pass Resolution 19-3758.

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