

House Community and Family Advancement Committee
Opponent Testimony on HB 294
10.20.15
Heather N. Pollock

Chairman Derickson, Vice Chairman Gintner, Ranking Member Howse, and members of the House Community and Family Advancement Committee, I stand before you today to offer opponent testimony on House Bill 294 which would prohibit state funds from going to entities that perform elective abortions or affiliate with any entity that performs elective abortions.

I have not had an abortion. I have, however, been a client of Planned Parenthood. When I was a freshman in college, my mom took me to Planned Parenthood to be sure that anything I might be getting into on my own would be safe. She wanted me to be responsible. She wanted me to hear it from others- experts, healthcare providers. I got my first pelvic exam and Pap smear from a kind, middle-aged, female doctor, not from the old, male, family doctor I'd been seeing since I was a child. They gave me a clean bill of health, a few pamphlets, some good advice, a handful of condoms, and a start up packet for birth control.

My mother took me. Did you get that? I didn't slink in; I wasn't hiding; there was no shame; it was a good idea. It established for me a habit of taking care of myself. They gave me a plastic card to hang on my shower nozzle that illustrated how to give myself a breast exam. I did that. Monthly.

They gave me a place to go whenever I had questions or needed advice about my body. And about how using your body is linked to using your mind and how it all affects your heart. Yes, Planned Parenthood provides all of that.

In the twenty-five years since that first visit I have only had two jobs that provided healthcare (that is a whole other rant, mind you); and so, I continued as a patient of Planned Parenthood. I could not have afforded to take care of myself any other way. Was I poor? Uneducated? Undeserving? Promiscuous? No. No. No. And unequivocally, no. Our system is set up in a way that middle class folks can't get access to a lot of what we need to live right. And if you're a woman, you can count on it being twice as hard.

I wasn't born yesterday. I am an intelligent, educated, adult woman. It is very clear to me that this plan to Defund Planned Parenthood isn't about "saving the babies". Everyone in this room knows that less than 3% of what is provided by Planned Parenthood is abortions. It's clear to me this tack is very much about incurring moral outrage in people in order to have them bring Planned Parenthood to its knees.

This is how you wage war on the poor, and on women: you find a way to convince regular people to vote against their own interests, against things that are good for the community. This war is about controlling women's bodies and what goes into those bodies and what comes out of those bodies and what is done to those bodies and who gets to do it. Each of us here knows this.

I'd like to tell you a little something about controlling my body. My husband and I struggled for over two years to get pregnant. We very much planned to be parents. After 7 rounds of fertility treatments called IUI's, we ultimately got pregnant by means of IVF. We have a beautiful, healthy, and intelligent two and a half year old daughter today. I'm 44. I remember the first "test tube baby", Louise Brown. She was conceived in 1978. The cutting edge research that began less than 50 years ago is the same research that allowed me to become a parent less than three years ago. The critical work that Planned Parenthood helps make possible, makes parents out of people who could otherwise not conceive children. It doesn't get more "planned" than that. Planned Parenthood isn't about destroying babies, or selling their morbid corpses to Big Pharma. Planned Parenthood is about providing women -and men- what they need to get to parenthood when they are most prepared, even if the odds are actually against them.

I cannot abide a world in which an informed path to parenthood is removed from me, decided for me. That is not the world I choose to live in. That is not the world I vote for. And I vote.

I stand with Planned Parenthood because they have stood with me, for a quarter of a century. Because of Planned Parenthood, and my mother, who took me there when I was 18, I am a responsible, healthy, sexually active Woman. Wife. Mother.

I'm ashamed of none of these things. I am not ashamed of Planned Parenthood. I stand with Planned Parenthood, and I want you - the people who decide the laws of my state - to as well.

Thank you for allowing me to tell you my story. I am happy to answer any questions at this time.

Heather N. Pollock
122 Conger Ave.
Akron, Ohio 44303
330.208.3832
hnp1@uakron.edu