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**Testimony to the State of Ohio Senate Committee on Government  
Oversight and Reform  
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Chairman Coley, Vice Chair Seitz, Ranking member Yuko, and distinguished members of the committee, thank you for allowing me to testify today on House Bill 294.

I stand here today both as a concerned member of the Columbus community, as well as a medical professional. My name is Dr. Elise Berlan and I am an Adolescent Medicine specialist at Nationwide Children's Hospital and an Associate Professor of Pediatrics at The Ohio State University in Columbus, Ohio.

Today, I join you to testify in opposition to House Bill 294, which would defund Planned Parenthood in Ohio.

At the present time, our state is facing a host of issues that are related to the health and safety of teens and, in particular, young women. Ohio's rate of infant mortality is among the highest in the country, and the rates are even higher amongst African-American babies.

On top of that, teen pregnancy has been steadily increasing, as are sexually transmitted infections.

As someone who conducts research on teen pregnancy prevention and improving access to reproductive health services in pediatrician, I know the importance not only of getting tested and receiving treatment, but also of medically accurate sex education.

While some young women and men are fortunate enough to have access to information that will allow them to make smart, safe decisions regarding their sexual health, many are left without the critical facts they need. If they are not getting key information on sexual decision-making, pregnancy prevention and sexually transmitted infections from their parents, guardians, or schools, how can we expect them to live healthy lives?

Right now, we are seeing the consequences of a lack of information play out. High rates of teen pregnancy and sexually transmitted infections are both **preventable**, if we continue to provide young people with the resources they need. But, as I stand here today, it seems that we are preparing to do just the opposite.

Defunding Planned Parenthood is not simply misguided, it is dangerous.

Each year, Planned Parenthood in Ohio provides thousands of women and men, many of whom are young and without anywhere else to turn, with STI tests, well-women checkups, contraceptives, breast and cervical cancer exams, and information that they need to make good decisions for themselves, their partners and their families.

As a doctor who focuses on the well-being of young people, I am proud to see that during the last several years, we have come together to fight back against the high rates of infant mortality and teen pregnancy in our state. What I do not understand is attacking a compassionate health provider who has been fighting that very same battle for years.

Defunding Planned Parenthood will only hurt the very people that we should be helping.

Planned Parenthood's sex education programs, many of which are funded through the Personal Responsibility Education Program, impress upon young women the importance of reducing unintended teen pregnancy. By doing so, young girls are able to stay in school, get an education and find a job that will allow them to support themselves, and then have children when they are **ready** and, just as importantly, can provide them with the care they need.

For women who are pregnant, Planned Parenthood is a valuable resource in keeping their baby healthy and reducing rates of premature birth, one of the leading factors in infant mortality.

Planned Parenthood provides **confidential** health care, so that young people can receive services and information without fear of being judged or shamed.

Contrary to what opponents claim, Planned Parenthood is, and has been for 87 years, an **essential** part of the health care community in Ohio. I urge you to reconsider your support of this legislation and work alongside our health care community, including Planned Parenthood, to ensure the health and safety of all Ohioans.