

Vontrara Colbert
Parma, OH

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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.

When I was 15, I got pregnant and I had to go before a judge to get everything approved before I could get help. I was all alone.

I'm 36 now and I have two kids, ages 17 and 8. What I've learned over time is that Planned Parenthood is an essential place for teens and women to have access to information about their health and options they need – including birth control, abortion, and education. It's a good place, a safe place.

When I was young and pregnant, I felt like I had no one to talk to and I have met so many girls who found themselves in the same situation over the years. There are places to go that make you feel bad about your situation and your choices and then there is Planned Parenthood. They give you options, explain those options – but they don't judge and they help you get what you need, no matter your circumstances.

If you have kids before you're ready, you're limited. You can't finish school or get good housing or be in a good place financially. It's a double-edged sword. Women don't need blame, they need options.