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**Testimony to the State of Ohio Senate Committee on Government Oversight and Reform
January 25, 2016**

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 am writing this letter in support of the Southwest Ohio Region of Planned Parenthood and the outstanding services provided by their Education Department.

For over 14 years, I have managed and/or directed programs that work with at-risk youth. Currently, I manage a vocational education program for young adults ages 18-24 who have dropped out of school. These youth are severely under-resourced and in order to complete high school, they must overcome significant personal, social and financial barriers. With little to no appropriate family support systems, these youth struggle to learn essential life skills, especially the skills needed to establish and maintain safe and healthy relationships.

For years, local government agencies were able to provide educational programs dealing with relationships and sexuality; however, those programs have long since closed and finding a replacement proved extremely difficult. In fact, it took more than 2 years of searching to discover an agency that had the expertise and desire, along with age-appropriate curricula to work with our population. That agency was Planned Parenthood of Southwest Ohio.

Since June 2015, Planned Parenthood has taught more than 50 out of school youth covering topics such as healthy relationships, the prevention of sexually transmitted diseases, understanding the sexual spectrum and responsible ways to prevent unintended pregnancies. In addition, they have covered general health concerns, including issues related to sanitation and hygiene. In fact, Planned Parenthood has provided products - at no cost - to ensure the dignity and respect of our youth.

Planned Parenthood of Southwest Ohio and their education department deliver a professional and quality program that has been well received. Their instruction has enabled youth to accept new information without feeling ashamed or acting out in order to mask their lack of knowledge in areas regarding sexuality. To genuinely connect with these youth and to truly educate them to act more responsible both emotionally and sexually in relationships is a rare talent and the compassion and expertise of Planned Parenthood staff has had a real and profound impact within our program.

Should you have any questions or concerns, please do not hesitate to call me (937) 269-4043.

Sincerely,

Jerry Farley, Ed. D.
Program Manager
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