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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.

For years now, I've considered myself to be a supporter of Planned Parenthood. However, it wasn't until recently that I found out just how much I needed them. Having been fortunate enough to be covered by my parents high-quality health insurance, I've always relied on a privatized OBGYN's office for my reproductive health care. Last month, when I began a relationship with a new partner and realized we were both long overdue for STI testing, I tried to make an appointment with my gynecologist. The office told me that my insurance only covered one visit per year, and that I wasn't due for my annual appointment until June. Though I had never utilized any of Planned Parenthood's services before, I knew exactly where to turn. I checked their website, and found that I could schedule an appointment almost any time in the morning or afternoon, nearly any day of the week.

Between the educational videos playing on the television and the pamphlets made available in the lobby, I was probably exposed to more information about sexual health during my five minute wait time that I was during my four years of high school. Even though part of me has always felt somewhat embarrassed about seeking STI related services, the immensely welcoming staff who I interacted with at Planned Parenthood completely put me at ease. I had always thought that I was well educated about STI's, but Planned Parenthood provided me with crucial information that I had never heard. I learned that my sexual habits were not as safe as I had believed, and that there were measures I needed to be taking in order to better protect myself. When I told them I was with a new partner, they provided me with a pamphlet on how to identify and get help with relationship abuse, just in case I should need it. Unlike with my usual gynecologist, I didn't have to summon up the courage to ask for any of this information. Planned Parenthood ensured that they provided me with just about all the information I would need to know. Before leaving, I was given the instructions on how to access a patient portal, so I could view my results as soon as they came back.

Going into Planned Parenthood that day, I thought I was simply using them as a "back-up plan." However, my experience was more positive and reassuring than anything I'd experienced at my OBGYN's office—so much so, that I would seriously consider making Planned Parenthood my primary source for reproductive healthcare. I stand with Planned Parenthood because I have seen first hand that they are a vital, and an irreplaceable, resource for the community.