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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.

My name is Julie Thompson, I have worked at Planned Parenthood for 8 years as a Licensed Practical Nurse (LPN) and I do HIV testing. I graduated from East Canton High School and completed nursing school at Brown Mackie College in Akron.

I went to nursing school because I wanted to make a difference for our younger patients and help them with getting education. I was a teenage mom myself, so this is personal to me. My patients are usually 15-30 years old and I see lots of teenagers.

Some of them are intravenous drug users, victims of rape and incest, but lots of patients are coming in for birth control. There has been a huge increase of HIV testing in our office. About half of them get their HIV tests for free. We provide a lot of education on birth control and STI testing and treatment.

Our patients come back to us because we provide non-judgmental health care. We make them feel very comfortable and give them personalized care. I had two patients that came in on Friday who are prime examples for this. One is a foster mom. She came in for HIV testing since she's had new partners. She's an only child and her mother died. She has no one to talk to. I listened to talk about how she was a victim of domestic violence. I gave her referrals to counseling. Another patient I saw on Friday is in her 40s and has been coming to Planned Parenthood since she was 16. I had another patient who was being molested in foster care. The foster home had no idea. I had an IV drug user who comes in for regular testing has been trying to get clean for years.

Everyone needs to know how much these services are utilized and appreciated. Many patients don't feel comfortable going to their primary care doctor or usual OB GYN doctor for HIV testing or STI testing, because they feel like they will be shamed.

A lot of people have lost their insurance because of the job market. Then they don't have money to go elsewhere. I am at a loss to say where our patients would go if we didn't offer these services.

Some of our patients could go to the health department, but have longer wait times, longer times to get appointments, and so many uninsured people go there that they are overbooked. For many of our patients, we are the only doctor they ever see. Without Planned Parenthood, we would definitely see an increase of Gonorrhea and Chlamydia, which lead to infertility, and HIV and other STIs.