

Brianne Cain
Cincinnati, OH

**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.

When I was first asked to publicly share my experience with Planned Parenthood, my first thoughts had nothing to do whether I would or would not be comfortable doing so, but which experiences to choose! I've been using Planned Parenthood as my main healthcare provider since I was 16 years old, if not younger, and I'm 28 now, so Planned Parenthood has been through a lot with me! I've always known Planned Parenthood was a place I could trust... somewhere I could go to feel safe, welcome, and unjudged. I've made some questionable decisions in my past, but choosing Planned Parenthood was never one of them.

When I was a teenager, I came in to PP for an STI test and found out soon after that I had tested positive for HPV. I actually found out via a message on my cell phone and was so freaked out I threw my phone across the room! My parents were out of town, I didn't know how to talk to my boyfriend, and I didn't know what to think. All I knew about HPV was what I had learned in school – it meant warts and it meant FOREVER. Fortunately, after speaking with a doctor I felt much better. HPV does not mean warts, there are a lot of different strains. A positive diagnosis of HPV is not a lifetime sentence. Though many of us are taught that HPV, because it is a virus, is incurable, it's a little more complicated than that and healthy, young woman can actually fight it off. To help my body do this my doctor encouraged me to basically just take care of myself... Drink water, eat healthy, quit smoking, etc. very basic, sound advice that I had no idea related to HPV. I also received guidance on how to talk to my boyfriend and some literature to make that a little bit easier. At a time where I felt scared and alone, PP was there to ease my mind and walk me through it. And not once did I ever feel I was being criticized or looked down on. On the contrary, I felt supported and I felt good about myself for getting the test and sure enough when I returned, I believe 6 months later, my HPV test was negative.

When I became sexually active, I talked with my mom who made an appointment with Planned Parenthood. I started using an oral contraceptive and I thought I was using it properly. I knew you had to take one every day and I knew what to do if I accidentally skipped a day... Or two... Unfortunately, I didn't realize how important the time of day was, or that the protection from pregnancy could be compromised very quickly if you missed a couple days. Due to this misinformation and the fact that I was a schedule/time challenged teenager, I eventually became pregnant. I think when I first found out I was pregnant I was in shock... I had taken an at-home test, but it didn't seem real until a doctor told me. I called off work and didn't get out of bed for three days. I had always assumed that finding out I was pregnant would be a happy occasion, but I was miserable. After some soul-searching and talking with my boyfriend I decided to get an abortion. Although it was not an easy decision to make, knowing PP

was there for me made it possible for me to make that choice for myself. I have never regretted making that decision and I have never regretted choosing PP as my abortion provider.

Although I wish I never had to deal with an STI or an abortion, having a place to go where I didn't have to be ashamed made my experiences as positive as they could have been. Now that I'm older I think about what my life would have been like if PP would not have been there and the idea is truly frightening. When I found out I was pregnant I was still, in many ways, a child with a lot of growing up to do. I've had problems with alcohol in the past and although I'm sober now, I don't know that that would be case if I had started a family as a teenager, especially a family I wasn't ready to start.

Brianne Cain