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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.

My name is Brian Lutz, resident of Lakewood, Ohio in Cuyahoga County, and I am pleading on behalf of myself, my clients, and my community for legislators here in the State of Ohio to vote No on House Bill 294 which would defund Planned Parenthood of Greater Ohio.

As a Community Health Educator at PPGOH, I work passionately to provide our community with non-judgmental, medically-accurate sexual and reproductive health information by which empowers our community, men, women, and teens, to make safe, responsible, proactive sexual health decisions. The skills that our community members learn—including how to recognize healthy relationships, how to be inclusive of all people, and how to make important sexual health decisions—are life-long skills that only make the communities here in the State of Ohio stronger, healthier, empowered, and responsible. Taking the very necessary funding away from Planned Parenthood is an act of robbing from our communities strong, healthy, responsible, and empowered community members.

One of my primary tasks at Planned Parenthood of Greater Ohio is providing to the public free, confidential and/or anonymous HIV tests. I cannot stress enough what a vital, necessary, and life-saving service this test provides to the residents of Cuyahoga County. Our clients come to Planned Parenthood for so many reasons—a simple routine and responsible testing appointment, a dishonest partner, a broken heart, a drug addiction they cannot manage, abuse from a parent or a partner, a membership in a community disproportionately affected by HIV/AIDS, a secret they cannot share with another healthcare provider, the ability to get a necessary and responsible test without needing to worry about privacy or the ability to pay. Most of all, our clients come to Planned Parenthood because we have a name and a reputation they trust.

This 20 minute rapid HIV test is not just a test—it is an intervention for the client. It is a time to provide client-centered risk reduction counseling to a community member in need. It is a time to listen to the concerns and emotions of someone who cannot talk to anyone else. It is a time to share what can be devastating news of a positive test results and to link them to the resources available to them. It is a time to be a shoulder to cry on or a friend to cry with after deliverance of such news. It is a time to share with a client tools and strategies to make proactive and responsible sexual health decisions who may be learning this information for the first time.

A vote “Yes” on any of the bills introduced this year designed specifically to defund Planned Parenthood does not just defund Planned Parenthood. A “yes” vote will defund the community of its health. It will defund our community of its strength and its power. It will defund our community of its future and its prosperity.

Again, I plead with legislators here in the State of Ohio to vote No on all attempts to defund Planned Parenthood. I ask our representatives to care, no matter what.

Thank you.