

Testimony of Tiffany Stainfield
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Opposing House Bill 294
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My name is Tiffany Stainfield and I am a second year medical student at Ohio University Heritage College of Osteopathic Medicine, where my proudest achievement thus far has been starting a chapter of Medical Students for Choice with a roster of 117 medical students to date. I am from the Toledo, Ohio, area, but my undergraduate career was spent at the University of Cincinnati as a *Cincinnatus* scholar, where I thoroughly enjoyed earning my degree in Philosophy and Chemistry, and graduated with highest honors from the University Honors Program.

I am here in Columbus today to oppose House Bill 294 and to speak against the defunding of Planned Parenthood in Ohio.

While at the University of Cincinnati, I was employed as Peer Educator by the UC Student Wellness Center where I created and implemented health and wellness programming for 3 years. One of the Wellness Center's main agendas was normalizing healthy behaviors for students; most notably, *normalizing* annual STI testing. With the help of the national GYT: Get Yourself Tested campaign, we at the Wellness Center referred hundreds, if not thousands, of University of Cincinnati students to get STI testing at the Planned Parenthood on Auburn Avenue in Cincinnati. Additionally, many of my co-workers and I also received care at that Planned Parenthood, for both our personal health care and to lead by example, enabling us to talk to students about how empowering it is to take control of your own sexual health. Planned Parenthood provides nearly 155,000 STI tests annually, and though these patients are largely underserved in rural and urban areas, they are also everyday people, including myself and many of my friends.

The reason we refer university students to Planned Parenthood is simple; many students, under their parents incomes or insurances, are not qualified for other state or federally funded grants covering STI testing at other health centers. Even more common, because many students go away to college, they oftentimes cannot access a new primary care physician in a timely manner, as Ohio will be short of about 5,000 Primary Care Physicians by 2020. ¹ Because of convenient locations like the Auburn Avenue Planned Parenthood, there is access to safe, effective, affordable health care for students like myself, and probably people we all know, seeing as 1 in 5 people in the United States will receive care at Planned Parenthood. ²

Now that I live and serve in Athens County, the poorest county in Ohio at a poverty rate of over 31%³, I am constantly faced with people who simply do not receive health

¹ Dayton Daily News, Nov. 5, 2012. <http://www.daytondailynews.com/news/news/filling-physician-shortage-faces-barriers/nSwP6/>

² PP Report. <https://www.plannedparenthood.org/about-us/who-we-are/planned-parenthood-at-a-glance>

³ Athens News, Feb 2103. http://www.athensnews.com/news/local/latest-poverty-report-shows-continuing-struggle-for-many-athens-countians/article_ffa38c2e-d5ca-50a6-be41-815812e4d40f.html

education or services as a direct result of health disparities. In Athens, I sit on the Planned Parenthood Community Leadership Committee. We directly promote health education by hosting various events in the community and actively fundraise for things like oral contraception for teens without insurance and PAP smears for women who cannot otherwise receive them. Did you know PAP smears are the most successful cancer screening tool in the world, to date?⁴ Defunding Planned Parenthood in Ohio will take away access to the most sensitive cancer screening tool ever for more than 4,000 women, which, as a soon-to-be health care provider, seems counterintuitive to improving health care in this country. From my perspective as a Planned Parenthood Leadership Committee member, medical student, and women's health activist, I'd like to impress to you this: just because people are underserved, does not mean they are undeserved.

My final testament lies here. House Bill 294 cuts funding from "entities" that "perform" or "promote nontherapeutic abortions." However, it is the services I mentioned above; the cancer screenings, the STI testing, the contraception, that will be yanked from public funding, simply because they are offered at Planned Parenthood, an "entity" that at *only some* locations provides abortions. Currently, the federal Hyde Amendment prevents Medicaid funding of abortions, and right now, Women Have Options is Ohio's only independent abortion fund, largely supported by individual, private, donors.⁵ If is the case that the state already does not fund abortions, and monies mentioned in HB 294 are being taken from cancer screenings, STI testing, and contraception, does it not seem that this bill is simply using anti-choice tactics as a mere means to cut health services? Additionally, knowing that access to contraception and health education has been proven to lower the rate of abortions per capita as published by the New England Journal of Medicine⁶, wouldn't, then, defunding preventative health care and education in Ohio *increase* the need for an abortion? Just last Friday, Jan 22, TIME Magazine, published an article stating, "Education, and sex education in particular, was key in getting women to use contraception and lower the abortion rate." House Bill 294, the same legislation that makes constitutionally legal abortions less accessible in Ohio, is *also* the same legislation that would take away the *very means* that prevents abortions in the first place; education, contraception, and affordable, accessible health care.

For the sake of STI screening for healthy people like myself, cancer prevention for underserved women, and in order to *directly reduce* the need for abortion in the state of Ohio, I urge you to vote against House Bill 294. Your vote against the bill protects women's Constitutional rights, promotes healthy families, and puts the trust back in the hands of the over 65% of Ohioans that *do not* support defunding of Planned Parenthood. The future of healthcare depends on your objection. Thank you for your time

⁴ NPR, April 30, 2015. <http://www.npr.org/sections/health-shots/2015/04/30/398872421/the-great-success-and-enduring-dilemma-of-cervical-cancer-screening>

⁵ <http://www.fundabortionnow.org/funds/women-have-options>

⁶ NEJM. Jan 2015, <http://www.nejm.org/doi/pdf/10.1056/nejmoa1400506>