

Lauren Blauvelt-Copelin
House Bill 297
Opponent Testimony
Ohio House Ways and Means Committee
TBA

Chairman Merrin, Vice Chair LaRe, Ranking Member Rogers, and Members of the Ohio House Ways and Means Committee, my name is Lauren Blauvelt-Copelin and I am the Vice President of Government Affairs and Public Advocacy for Planned Parenthood Advocates of Ohio and Planned Parenthood of Greater Ohio. Thank you for allowing me the opportunity to present testimony in opposition to House Bill 297.

In Ohio, Planned Parenthood health centers proudly provide abortion as part of the full range of reproductive health care. They also provide life-saving health care like breast and cervical cancer screenings, STI testing and treatment, HIV testing to over 85,000 patients annually, and medically accurate sexual health education programs to nearly 40,000 clients each year. Every day, people come through the doors of Planned Parenthood health centers for those safe, reliable, confidential, and judgment-free services. The advocacy work we do at Planned Parenthood Advocates of Ohio is dedicated to protecting the essential health and education services that Planned Parenthood of Greater Ohio and Planned Parenthood Southwest Ohio Region provides to communities, and we are joined in support by more than 400,000 supporters committed to protecting reproductive health care and rights across the state of Ohio.

Planned Parenthood health centers in Ohio and across the country provide *expert*, high quality, and affordable reproductive health care that our patients rely on. And just as important, Planned Parenthood provides reproductive health care services that are unbiased and judgment-free. More than anything, what Planned Parenthood doctors and nurses hear from their patients is that they felt safe, cared for, and free to make decisions about their reproductive health and life without pressure or agenda. Planned Parenthood provides our patients with medically-accurate and scientifically-based information and best practices recommended by American Congress of Obstetrician Gynecologists and the American Medical Association. Whether patients are deciding to start a family, experiencing an unplanned pregnancy, planning to terminate a pregnancy, or have decided to carry a pregnancy to term and utilize adoption services, they are given all their options and information and then are supported in whatever decision they make about their reproductive lives by compassionate professional staff. Planned Parenthood provides unbiased, judgment-free care, which is what all Ohioans deserve.

We already know this quality of care is undervalued by the majority of this legislative body and the DeWine administration that lead the charge to defund Planned Parenthood and other

abortion-providing health care providers by barring them from competing in the state funding process for federal grants.

Just this summer this body diverted 7.5 million dollars to Crisis Pregnancy Centers from the state budget, an unprecedented increase 7 times larger than the last budget.

Now this committee wants to tip the scale even further away from real health care providers to fake clinics. HB 297 incentivizes and rewards individuals who contribute to crisis pregnancy centers by creating a refundable tax credit for 50% of the amount of the taxpayer's contributions. This tax incentive is unlike any other in Ohio and puts Crisis Pregnancy Centers (CPC) above *all other* charitable and service providing entities in Ohio. HB 297 will cost the state of Ohio at least \$4.4 million dollars from the General Revenue Fund and at least \$100,000 out of the Local Government and Public Library Funds without any way to recoup those losses. This body continues to miss use Ohioans tax dollars to shame pregnant people and provide favoritism to Ohio Right to Life.

This favoritism is undeserved and in the worst interest for patients seeking care because the vast majority of Crisis Pregnancy Centers do not provide medical care and are not staffed daily by medical professionals. Crisis Pregnancy Centers are very biased. They have a clear and well known agenda to prevent pregnant people from accessing safe, legal abortion.

Rather than provide medically-accurate health care options, CPCs have been known to give patients false information about their own pregnancies, such as telling a patient they are earlier in pregnancy than they really are and urging them to delay accessing additional professional care.

Rather than providing a patient all their options and supporting the decision they make for their own lives and their own family, CPCs will attempt to shame patients into continuing a pregnancy, often using religious propaganda. And because CPCs are not bound by state and federal privacy laws, CPCs have also been known to contact a patient's family or employer to intimidate them into continuing a pregnancy. This could not be done by a regulated medical organization that is bound by HIPAA.

Rather than providing expert reproductive health care, CPCs allow untrained laypeople to give patients medically inaccurate and potentially dangerous information about their pregnancies that could cause serious harm, because they do not have the medical training or expertise to recognize or treat health concerns. For example, workers in crisis pregnancy centers have misidentified a client's IUD as a pregnancy, or have done an ultrasound and failed to recognize a dangerous ectopic pregnancy, which untreated could result in a patient's death.

CPCs have a very clear agenda to coerce, shame, and mislead patients who are looking for support in making decisions about their lives and their futures. Patients in Ohio deserve unbiased, medically-accurate, expert reproductive healthcare, like the kind they can get at Planned Parenthood.

Ohio is facing alarming STI rates and shameful rates of infant and maternal mortality, particularly for Black families. Rather than funneling more tax-payer dollars to these fake clinics, Ohio lawmakers should be utilizing those resources to address the very real health crises in our state. This bill is an outrageous and irresponsible use of power and resources.

I am asking you to stop inserting yourself in between patients and their doctors. Stop creating barriers for Ohioans to choose the best health care provider for their needs. Bring back fair competition to state and federal grants for health care providers and allow the organizations who can serve people the best to use tax dollars appropriately to provide expert care so that Ohioans can choose for themselves who serves them best. HB 297 wrongly chooses for them. Please vote no on HB 297.

Thank you for your time. I can answer any questions you may have.