

Testimony of Brittany Kasturiarachi
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Opposing House Bill 294
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My name is Brittany Kasturiarachi. I am a second year medical student at Ohio University Heritage College of Osteopathic Medicine. I studied Biochemistry at Kent State University and minored in Biology and Economics. I currently run a variety of advocacy initiatives for health policy among medical students at OU-HCOM and in the state of Ohio. I also sit on the Medical Student Executive Board for the Ohio State Medical Association.

I drove to Columbus this morning to speak in opposition to House Bill 294.

Preventative care in medicine can be one of the most effective ways to take care of patients while also reducing healthcare costs long term. Cancer is the second leading cause of death in the United States according to Centers for Disease Control. Planned Parenthood is responsible for providing more than 14,000 cancer screenings per year. Additionally, the nearly 80,000 people that receive services from Planned Parenthood rely on the primary care that's provided including STI screenings, cancer screenings, well woman exams, and birth control.

1 in 5 women have used the services of Planned Parenthood. That's just under 1.2 million women in Ohio that would be adversely affected if Planned Parenthood funding would be taken away¹. That also means that women that rely, or could need to rely on Planned Parenthood in the future would not have an affordable, reliable option for women's healthcare.

Many people don't consider the benefits of Planned Parenthood from an economic perspective. Across the United States, we can save approximately \$13.6 billion dollars in net public savings if Planned Parenthood stays funded by the state and federal governments². This surprisingly does not include the government savings from the women that may not be able to fiscally raise a child. Essentially Planned Parenthood provides family planning services that allow women, especially those of lower incomes, to stay above the poverty line, off of welfare, all while also providing primary care services. In the words of former Labor Secretary Robert Reich, cutting funding for Planned Parenthood "isn't only morally wrong, it's bad economics"³.

When I was in middle school and high school, I don't think the words "condom" or "safe sex" was ever uttered in a classroom. The only form of contraception I learned in school was abstinence—which is definitively not an effective way to teach adolescents how to prevent unplanned pregnancies and sexually transmitted

¹ <http://kff.org/other/state-indicator/distribution-by-gender/>

² <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=R9p-TukvVp8>

³ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=R9p-TukvVp8>

infections. I grew up in a household where my parents felt that regardless of our Catholic beliefs, it was important to understand the consequences of having a child you aren't prepared for, or contracting an STI due to unsafe sexual practices, and how to prevent these with condoms and other forms of birth control. Not everyone grows up in a household like mine—I know some of my closest friends did not and abstinence education simply wasn't enough. Planned Parenthood provides education to young adults about domestic violence, family planning, contraception, and healthy relationships—all of which help make better and more informed decisions about sexual practices and health.

A majority of Ohioan voters believe that Planned Parenthood should not be defunded, to the tune of 65%⁴. As Ohio's elected leaders I would hope you would represent the wishes of your constituents. Throughout my testimony today, I have not mentioned abortions until right now, and that is simply because 97% of Planned Parenthood's services are of the preventative nature⁵, and all of the programs you propose to defund are educational programming and preventive health care. Proponents of HB 294 believe that because Planned Parenthood provides abortions, they should lose their government funding. Planned Parenthood along with every other abortion provider in our state does not use government funds for abortion care. *Roe v. Wade* put into place constitutional protections for abortion and protected women's health back in the 70's and everyday since then. It's not for any one of us to decide what health care services are the best for someone else—especially in a country that was founded on the notion that all people are equal and respected. Planned Parenthood can prevent far more abortions via birth control if they remain funded than if Planned Parenthood is forced to close down. I urge you all to vote against HB 294. It would be a vote for protecting women and increasing economic savings in Ohio by promoting the family planning services that Planned Parenthood provides.

⁴ <https://www.yahoo.com/health/poll-shows-voter-opposition-to-defunding-planned-126358919127.html>

⁵ <https://www.plannedparenthood.org>