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November 2, 2015

Dear Members of the Ohio House of Representatives,

On behalf of Caracole, Inc. I am writing in support of Planned Parenthood Southwest Ohio Region (PPSWO). As the executive director of the primary provider of HIV care services in southwest Ohio, I am acutely aware the scope and depth and scope of services that they provide.

Caracole provides housing and medical case management services for individuals living with AIDS in the eight-county region of southwest Ohio. Each year, we serve over 1500 individuals. While we provide supportive services for those individuals know to be HIV+, PPSWO provides crucial HIV testing and education services and helps them access care. For the past three years, PPSWO has sublet two offices in our building for HIV testing. This partnership has been invaluable for our respective clients. PPSWO staff serve as a source for education and support for our clients and their partners. When someone tests positive, they are able to immediately connect them to care through our on-site staff. We frequently partner in responding to community issues such as rising hepatitis C rates and intravenous drug use.

It is imperative that PPSWO continue their HIV services through the Minority HIV/AIDS Initiative, which enables Planned Parenthood to provide anonymous and confidential HIV testing programs for free throughout the state, including in Cuyahoga, Stark, and Hamilton Counties. Planned Parenthood provides more than 13,000 HIV tests in their health centers and nearly 5,000 HIV tests in the community annually. In our community, PPSWO is one of the only programs that provides outreach services in non-traditional settings. Given the scope of the heroin epidemic in our community, we cannot afford to lose this resource.

Again I ask that you do not vote to defund PPSWO. If your objective is to stop abortions, eliminating HIV testing and education services does nothing to meet that end.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Linda Seiter
Executive Director

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Caracole provides safe, affordable housing and supportive services for individuals and families living with HIV/AIDS.

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