

Carmen Winant

11.4.2015

**Testimony to the State of Ohio House Committee on Community and Family
Advancement
November 4, 2015**

Chairman Derickson, Vice Chair Ginter, Ranking member Howse, and distinguished members of the committee, thank you for allowing me to testify today on House Bill 294.

Planned Parenthood has played a crucial role in my life – I’m so grateful that they exist.

I’ve visited Planned Parenthood many times over the years, often to routine health care, like pap smears and check ups. But there have been a two notable times that I thought I’d share here.

The first was when I was sixteen. I had had unprotected sex and was totally alone and afraid. I built up the courage to tell my mother and she took me to the Planned Parenthood in Santa Cruz, California, where we were living at the time. I don’t think I could forget the experience: the nurses and doctor I saw were supportive, non-judgmental and offered me prompt care. I left in under an hour with a morning after pill and having gotten several other STI tests, which were all free of cost. I am not sure if I would have become pregnant or not; in either case, I didn’t have to worry about living with the consequence of a bad decision I was pressured into making as a very young person. I went back to being a sixteen year old who hung out with her friends and did homework. Though it was reassuring to know that I had support to make choices and take care of my health if I needed.

The second notable time –flash-forward to my thirty-second year – was this last summer, in Portland Maine. My partner and I had been trying to conceive for about six months, and I suspected that I might (finally!) be pregnant. I got an over-the-counter test, but the results were hazy. I called around to every hospital and urgent care center I could find asking if I could come in for a urine test to confirm. I spent over an hour on the phone on holds and being transferred; most medical centers seemed confused by my request, or told me I’d have to come into the emergency room and potentially wait up to six hours, not to mention be hit with a major bill. I finally realized I could just call Planned Parenthood. I came in, gave a urine sample within ten minutes, and met with a doctor a few minutes after that: I was pregnant! (I write this a few months later; I’m 20 weeks along). We were overjoyed.

The first time I came into Planned Parenthood I was a scared sixteen year old who did not want to have a child of my own; the second time I was an adult who did. In both cases, I was given fantastic health care, treated with respect, professionalism

and dignity by the doctors, nurses and receptionists, and not charged hand over fist for my care. I'm so grateful to this place, which does a service not only for women, but all citizens. Women needn't feel shame about getting health care and making choices about our bodies: we should celebrate and defend this right.