

October 21, 2015

Testimony in Opposition to SB 214, De-funding of Planned Parenthood Bill

Senate Government Oversight and Reform Committee

Rabbi Jon Adland

Ohio Religious Coalition for Reproductive Choice

Thank you, Chairperson Coley, Ranking Minority Member Yuko, and members of the Senate Government Oversight and Reform Committee.

I am Rabbi Jon Adland. I am the spiritual leader of Temple Israel in Canton. I am also the chair of the Clergy Advocacy Board of Planned Parenthood Federation of American, which is a unique interfaith board of clergy and spiritual leaders representing Jews, Christians, Muslims, Sikh, and Sufi, and is made up of men and women of all ethnic backgrounds. I am proud to be an integral part of Planned Parenthood because this organization represents the core of my faith tradition, which includes a strong focus on women's health, reproductive rights, and reproductive justice.

I represent Reform Judaism's strong belief that religious rights and religious freedom are fundamental to every person. Judaism believes that we are created in God's image, not to look like God, but to act as we believe God wants us to act. Different religions understand this concept in different ways, but I draw the conclusion that acting like God demands of me to stand up for justice. Germaine to this conversation is reproductive justice. People of faith have differing views on abortion and even on birth control, but most of us agree that God has endowed people with free will and the ability to make moral decisions. Free will isn't a matter of politics or ideology and it's not to be exercised only when it's convenient. An unwanted pregnancy or a pregnancy that threatens a woman's health and life requires a decision that is made freely, with information that resources and support are available, whatever the decision.

By choosing freely to diminish the role Planned Parenthood can play in Ohio you will diminish the ability of women to take charge of their own lives and bodies. Planned Parenthood is an affirming and empowering organization. My belief as a rabbi is that we should do all that we can to give people the ability to take charge of their lives and their futures. We may disagree on the path to God. We may disagree on how to interpret the Bible's words. We should agree that the many paths to God are true and just. We don't all walk the same religious path, but we can agree that anyone who uses the power of their faith tradition to make decisions about their choices, their minds and bodies, is walking a righteous path toward a better future.

I urge you to vote against SB 214.