



Written Testimony 10/21/2015

Senate Government Oversight and Reform Committee

Senate Bill 214:

Ohio Public Health Association

Please accept this testimony from the Ohio Public Health Association (OPHA) regarding Senate Bill 214. The OPHA has over 600 registered members who work in state and local health departments, universities and academic settings, non-profit and community based organizations, and private sector settings. We represent thousands of public health professionals including physicians, nurses, epidemiologists, health educators, optometrists, chiropractors, administrators, and registrars.

It is the mission of the OPHA to be the trusted voice of public health in Ohio and to ensure the opportunity for all Ohioans to achieve the optimal level of health. In keeping with this mission, the OPHA recognizes the critical need for availability of and accessibility to high quality women's health services in all areas of our state.

If passed as written, Senate Bill 214 would prohibit the Ohio Department of Health (ODH) from allowing state and certain federal funds from being used to "contract or affiliate with any entity that performs or promotes non-therapeutic abortions", specifically with regard to the following programs: Violence Against Women Act funds; Breast & Cervical Cancer Prevention (BCCP) program funds; Infertility Prevention Project funds; Minority HIV/AIDS Initiative (MAI) funds; Personal Responsibility Education Program funds; and any funding related to infant mortality reduction.

The OPHA is asking the Committee to consider how limiting the use of these funds in the way stated in the bill may impact the availability of and accessibility to high quality women's health services for the thousands of women in Ohio who currently benefit from these programs. We are asking for careful consideration by Committee members as to whether entities that do not perform or promote non-therapeutic abortions (e.g. local health departments, federally qualified health centers, community health centers, etc) currently have the capacity to absorb and provide care for the thousands of women who will be impacted by these potential funding restrictions. For example, women currently enrolled in the BCCP program may have a longer waiting period for an appointment that could result in later stage diagnosis of breast or cervical cancer, and women served through the MAI program may temporarily lose access to critical treatment medications necessary to keep their disease in check. It is the position of the OPHA that the Ohio women who depend on these programs deserve to have their needs *fully considered and provided for* prior to a final decision on whether to enact this legislation.

Sincerely,

Claire Boettler, MPH, RN
President