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Testimony to the State of Ohio Senate Committee on Government Oversight and Reform

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Chairman Coley, Vice-chair Seitz, ranking member Yuko, and distinguished members of the Government Oversight and Reform committee, thank you for allowing me to testify today on Senate Bill 214.

My name is Jeseka Fuller and I am a community health educator for Planned Parenthood of Greater Ohio. On a daily basis, I teach responsible sexuality education classes to individuals of all ages at various schools and organizations and coordinate a peer education program for teens to be trained resources in their schools.

I speak today, on behalf of students who feel nervous or ashamed to get life-saving sexual and reproductive healthcare information. Being a non-judgmental ally in the community, I often hear of teens being afraid to tell their parents or guardians that they are sexually active. They worry they will be looked at differently or lose their parents trust. Many teens simply hear “do not have sex” and that was the “sex talk” whereas teens deserve the right to know why they should postpone sexual activity or how to protect themselves against an STI or unintended pregnancy when they do decide to engage in sexual activity.

We might think it’s very easy to say what is right or wrong, but we all must consider that we are human; humans who have desires, relations with others, a curious mindset, and yes, genitals. Sexuality is a natural element in ones life and the lack of comfort discussing the topic has serious consequences to our nation as well as ones health.

I can’t help but think that debating Planned Parenthoods services is doing nothing but muddy the water and question a natural part of being human. I can only imagine how much debating abortion access, makes young men and women uneasy. Naturally questioning if their decision to have an abortion was a “right” or “wrong” thing to do, that is normal. But, I don’t think there is anything American about not being given a choice at all.

Our youth has the right to choose where they receive care. Planned Parenthood of Greater Ohio had 80,000 women and men visit our centers last year. Regardless of what they came for, those 80,000 patients *chose* to come to us for care with confidence that they will receive non-judgmental, medically accurate information, and not having to risk being in a packed waiting room with a little kid who has the flu.

We understand that this is not a topic everyone feels comfortable addressing, but we know this is a crucial topic that is apart of our everyday life, regardless of age, demographic, religion, background, or financial status and we should all have access to the medical care we desire.