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

October 21, 2015

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 thoughts on funding PP

I would like to start off by stating that the funds you are considering taking away from over 80,000 men and women of Ohio do not in any way pay for Abortion services. These funds are use for life saving cancer screens, pap smears, breast exams, Sexuality Education, our Health Moms, Health Baby program and most importantly STI/HIV screening and treatments. I know that because I have worked for Planned Parenthood in Ohio just over nine years, as the Community HIV Testing and Outreach Manager. I oversee three HIV testing grants that we are awarded after entering into a rigorous competitive process to provide this much needed service in our communities. Through these grants we are able to provide free, confidential, nonjudgmental, compassionate HIV testing and counseling to over 4,000 men and women each year in Ohio. We have been awarded these grants for well over 30 years after submitting a grant proposal year after year showing the excellent work we do with those funds and the high-quality services we provide. Not only do we provide HIV Testing within our various Health Centers we also partner with a multitude of Community Organizations to provide this service on site. In Cleveland we provide free HIV testing on the Cleveland Department of Health's Health Mobile three afternoons a week, going into neighborhoods where there are many barriers to accessing health services.

Men and women come to Planned Parenthood for the free HIV Testing and counseling because they trust they will receive confidential, nonjudgmental, compassionate care. Not only do we provide the actual rapid HIV test, we also provide counseling and education following the Centers for Disease Control and Preventions protocols including risk reduction, safer sex, to include abstinence and support to those who test HIV positive. For many individuals, especially those at high risk for HIV, choose PP to provide their first HIV test. In fact, I recently had an individual travel 2 hours to test with PP; even though this individual had other places to choose to go, this person felt that we would provide the non judgmental, compassionate care and support; especially in the event if the HIV test was positive. Over the years the HIV Testing staff have heard many similar stories of individuals only wanting to test at Planned Parenthood.

So on behalf of the over 4,000 men and women in Ohio, who receive free, compassionate HIV testing and counseling and for the 80,000 citizens who rely on Planned Parenthood, I implore you to reconsider your efforts to defund Planned Parenthood's life saving, prevention programs.

Thank you.