

## Ohio Religious Coalition for Reproductive Choice

October 18, 2015

Testimony in Opposition to SB 214

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

I am Rev. Cheri Holdridge, a Board member of the Ohio Religious Coalition for Reproductive Choice, an ordained minister in the United Methodist Church, and pastor of The Village Church in Toledo, Ohio. Members of the Religious Coalition for Reproductive Choice include members of The United Methodist Church, the Episcopal Church, the United Church of Christ, the Presbyterian Church (USA), The Unitarian Universalist Association, Reform and Conservative Judaism, Catholics for Choice, and other independent religious organizations. I write today on behalf of this Coalition, urging you to vote against SB 214.

I have been a pastor in Ohio for twenty-five years, serving churches in Cincinnati, Findlay and now Toledo. My parishioners have included people who live on disability, fixed income, and those living in the inner city who are poor. My people are the people who benefit from the services that are provided by clinics such as Planned Parenthood.

*The Book of Discipline of the United Methodist Church* contains a statement carefully crafted by members of our General Conference: “Providing the care needed to maintain health, prevent disease, and restore health after injury or illness is a responsibility each person owes others and government owes to all, a responsibility government ignores at its peril. In Ezekiel 34:4a, God points out the failures of the leadership of Israel to care for the weak: ‘You don’t strengthen the weak, heal the sick, bind up the injured, bring back the strays, or seek out the lost.’ As a result all suffer.... We affirm the right of men and women to have access to comprehensive reproductive health/family planning information and services that will serve as a means to prevent unplanned pregnancies, reduce abortions, and prevent the spread of HIV/AIDS.” (Para. 162 V, pages 126-127, *The Book of Discipline of The United Methodist Church 2012*).

Our church believes that health care is a basic human right. Access to health care should not be used as a political tool, but that is exactly what is happening with SB 214. Planned Parenthood in Ohio provides vital health care to low income women and men in the form cancer screenings, birth control, HIV tests, infant mortality prevention programs, and Violence Against Women Act (VAWA) programs. More than 80,000 Ohioans are served by Planned Parenthood Clinics each year. More than half of their health centers are in rural or medically-underserved areas, meaning that without Planned Parenthood, other community providers may not be able to provide care to the additional patients who need access to health care services.

As a person of faith, I believe that we are called to care for the weak and those who are suffering in our communities. Planned Parenthood in Ohio provides vital health care services for Ohio’s weakest and most vulnerable citizens. I urge you to vote against SB 214.