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

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Good morning. 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 Natasha Larson and I live in Columbus, Ohio. I have had the pleasure of working in sexual health for the past four years. In this incredibly rewarding career, I've been able to work with middle school students, high school students, college students, and even adults discussing the multiple layers of sexual health. Taking my job at "face value", I provide education and awareness about sexually transmitted infections, pregnancy, birth control and healthy relationships.

But it's about more than that.

We provide youth and adults tools in navigating the healthcare system, help them assess their own personal goals and values, and help strengthen their communication skills so they can create a dialogue with their romantic partner about their relationship.

Working in prevention education has allowed me the opportunity to collaborate with several organizations that offer similar programming. One of our amazing community partners is SARNCO, the Sexual Assault Response Network of Central Ohio. Over the years, we've been active members of their prevention committee, helped train volunteer staff, and even assisted with a new community engagement program called Green Dot.

Whenever our agencies give presentations in the community, we have worked together to make sure our presentations are complimentary, not duplicative. I've had situations where teachers have contacted me stating that I was specifically recommended by SARNCO to help them continue their conversation about pregnancy and STI prevention. I've also been able to recommend SARNCO's services to teachers in situations where I believe the youth need additional information regarding sexual violence and oppression.

If House Bill 294 passes, this legislation would impact community members and patients not only through direct health care services, but through education. It would dissolve our partnership with SARNCO and any other rape crisis centers that receive funding through the Violence Against Women Act (VAWA). These partnerships are crucial because we know the key to prevention education is to provide a wide range of comprehensive services. And unfortunately, there are not enough providers in Ohio poised to accommodate our patients and students if Planned Parenthood is defunded.

So let's keep your community educated and healthy. Vote no on House Bill 294.

Thank you very much.

Natasha Larson