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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 Kelly Novak, and I live in Cleveland, Ohio.

I am here to state my strong and passionate opposition to Senate Bill 214.

Currently, I have the privilege of serving as the Director of Education and Outreach for Planned Parenthood of Greater Ohio. I support and oversee our Healthy Moms, Healthy Babies program; our HIV counseling and testing program; and our Personal Responsibility Education Project programs, as well as nine other programs throughout the state. I also personally manage the numerous requests Planned Parenthood receives for educational services throughout Cuyahoga County, the most populous county in the state, and foster our dozens of community partnerships.

When I think of my time in Planned Parenthood's Education department, I think of the great need for and the great trust in Planned Parenthood's comprehensive sexual health education and outreach services in Ohio. I think of the sixteen different schools in the Cleveland Metropolitan School District where we've been the exclusive provider of sexual health education, and the teachers, guidance counselors and students who told us they were so glad Planned Parenthood was there. I think of the young woman who came for a free, confidential HIV test in our Old Brooklyn Health Center after being released from a drug treatment facility, saying that she knew she could come to Planned Parenthood and not be judged, which was important to helping her stay clean and move on with her life. I think of the single mother from Youngstown we supported in our Healthy Moms, Healthy Babies program, who had no high school diploma, no job, no transportation, and was pregnant. With the help of Planned Parenthood's Community Health Worker, this young mom established regular prenatal care, obtained her own apartment, her own car, and her high school diploma. I think of how within our organization, we trained twelve of our educators throughout the state to deliver one of the most effective and revered sexual health education curriculums in the country, Get Real, an evidence-based program proven to help youth delay the onset of sexual activity.

I also think of the endless list of requests we receive for our educational and outreach services. In the northeast Ohio area alone in the last 6 months, we have received over 75 unduplicated requests for our presentations, workshops, trainings, participation health fairs, outreach testing, invitations to collaborations, and offers for partnerships. We receive these requests from a variety of middle and high schools; after-school academies; colleges and universities; social services organizations; churches and other places of worship; correctional facilities; foster care settings, among others – and these are on top of programs we already have. And of course, sometimes I just have a parent or caring adult call, asking for advice on how to best talk about difficult topics with the youth they care about. Time and again, Planned Parenthood is consistently the "go-to" organization for school and university administrators, students of all ages, social workers, coaches, parents, clergy, and community agencies.

This proposed bill would eliminate funding for Planned Parenthood's educational programs would leave thousands of people uncertain of where to turn for compassionate care; comprehensive, medically-accurate education; or vital resources for every unique of community. Planned Parenthood is a trusted name in health care and sexual health education; a vote against Planned Parenthood is a vote against your constituents who trust and depend on Planned Parenthood every day.