

Testimony of Cheryl Pentella,  
National Council of Jewish Women  
In Opposition to Senate Bill 214  
Ohio Senate Government Oversight and Reform Committee  
October 21, 2015

On behalf of the National Council of Jewish Women, which represents thousands of women across Ohio and hundreds of thousands across the country, I am here to respectfully urge the committee to not block Planned Parenthood from receiving federal funds that provide vital health care to tens of thousands of Ohioans, many in medically underserved areas.

Defunding Planned Parenthood would harm individuals struggling to make ends meet, women of color, young people, and others who continue to need the critical, quality health care Planned Parenthood has provided for more than 100 years. Defunding Planned Parenthood would deny women comprehensive reproductive health care, eliminating all access in communities where Planned Parenthood is the sole provider of such care. Planned Parenthood is a vital provider of preventive cancer screenings (14,000 breast and cervical cancer screenings annually), birth control, HIV/STD testing (155,000 STI tests annually) and treatment, violence against women programs, health education services for high school students and infant mortality prevention programs.

Without Planned Parenthood in these communities, you are increasing the risk of more unintended pregnancies. Without Planned Parenthood services, you are accepting the reality of our government assuming responsibility for more costly medical interventions, even death, for women whose diagnosis of cancer is not caught early. Without Planned Parenthood, your committee is accepting responsibility for the spread of sexually transmitted diseases that go undetected and untreated. Without Planned Parenthood, you are accepting the increased risk of more infants dying due to sudden infant death because parents are not provided vital information to help prevent it – in a state that ranks among the worst for infant mortality.

Your vote to defund Planned Parenthood will endanger Ohio's women and families. Your vote to defund Planned Parenthood would disproportionately hurt low-income women and families, women of color, and young people.

Further, as Ohio taxpayers we are disappointed in the time, energy and resources devoted to making these decisions to defund Planned Parenthood based upon discredited videos, which experts have proven, were heavily edited to be misleading. It is unfair and suggests political motivations that are beneath the integrity of your office. The extremists behind the Planned Parenthood smear campaign have a larger agenda: to restrict access to safe, legal abortion. But it is individuals and families who will suffer if these efforts succeed.

If your responsibility is to represent Ohioans, than your responsibility is to the 65 percent of Ohio voters who oppose defunding Planned Parenthood preventive health services. Your responsibility is to represent the interest of the majority – 60 percent in Ohio who do not believe that defunding is justified by the deceptively edited videos released by anti-abortion extremists.

NCJW is committed to ensuring access to safe, legal abortion. This is not a political issue or a religious issue. We believe in the separation of church and state. We believe it is our right – a right upheld by the U.S. Supreme Court – to make our own faith-informed health care decisions. NCJW vigorously opposes these efforts to trample on a woman's constitutional rights, eroding her moral autonomy and threatening her health and well being.

We urge the Ohio Senate to stop interfering with a woman's personal decision-making and access to safe abortion care. Further, it is clear these efforts are part of an ultimate agenda to push abortion out of reach. As a Jew, I stand by the right of every woman to make her own moral or faith-informed decision about abortion, in consultation with those she trusts, and I am proud to stand with Planned Parenthood.