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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 Adam Reilly and I manage the community based HIV testing program for Planned Parenthood Southwest Ohio Region (PPSWO). This program has provided over 3,500 HIV and hepatitis C (HCV) tests since its inception at PPSWO in 2011, identifying over 250 new cases of HIV and HCV. All of those newly diagnosed by our program are given in depth education about how the infection works, what treatment options are, linkage to medical care, and Ryan White case management services if needed. The individuals we serve have little to no access to health care services and have had little to no positive experiences in the traditional health care system. Our community based approach, reaching people through a variety of venues including, but not limited to; mobile unit testing at 30 plus sites around Hamilton, Butler, and Clermont counties, correctional facilities, treatment facilitates and harm reduction programs aimed at serving homeless individuals and those who inject drugs.

We have also had great success in re-engaging those living with HIV in medical services or case management services. This re-engaging leads to better health outcomes for the individual and better health outcomes for the community as a whole. Treatment is prevention; meaning that if you can get every person living with HIV into medical care and virally suppressed you will stop the spread of HIV to new individuals. This is a major component of the National HIV/AIDS Strategy adopted by Health and Human Services (HHS) and the Centers for Disease Control (CDC) in 2012 and is a vital component to ending the AIDS epidemic in the US.

HHS and CDC have identified Cincinnati as an “emerging” community, which means that the incidence rate of HIV is dramatically on the rise and additional resources should be allocated to combat this rise. If this rise continues coupled with the explosion of injection drug use Cincinnati will continue to see increased infection rates and a more pronounced community burden. This program aims to stem the tide of these new infections by providing barrier free testing and education services to most at risk communities.

We provide high quality counseling, testing, education, and community outreach to those most impacted by HIV, HCV, and STIs. All these services use medically accurate information and many rely on motivational interviewing to encourage behavior change, allowing them to be at less risk of infection in the future. As a nation we are very reactionary to issues and problems, but this program is being as proactive as possible so that a major reaction isn't needed in the future. By being proactive we can help save lives, lower overall medical costs, and build a healthier community for everyone.

Thank you for your time.