

Hillary Gyuras  
Toledo, Ohio

**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 committee, thank you for allowing me to testify today on House Bill 294.

Good afternoon. My name is Hillary Gyuras, and I am a resident of Toledo, OH and an employee of Planned Parenthood of Greater Ohio. I am here today to express my opposition to HB 294.

I began working with PPGOH as a Health Care Assistant at the Toledo Health Center shortly after graduating from the University of Toledo in May of 2013. As an Assistant, I collected patient histories and prepared patients for their visit with one of our highly qualified Certified Nurse Practitioners. I learned a lot about the quality of life of the residents in my city by spending hours every day talking with them about their medical histories, home lives, and histories with intimate partner violence.

In June of 2014, I took on a new role as External Affairs Coordinator and began training to provide reproductive health education. This was an exciting time in Toledo, because it was the first time in several years that Planned Parenthood had a health educator in the city. As such, sex education in the area was severely lacking.

In my new position, I was able to travel about the city of Toledo to teach classes and participate in health fairs. The ability to travel around the city, have conversations with residents, and answer questions during education events further deepened my perspective on the lives of those living in Toledo and Lucas County.

One thing I have noticed in both of my roles at PPGOH is that there are pervasive myths about sexual and reproductive health that still exists in our community. This is likely due to the lack of sex education that I mentioned earlier.

Here are just a few examples.

I have repeatedly heard from high school students AND adults that there is a cure for HIV. This is not true.

I have heard from high school students that hormonal contraceptives prevent the spread of sexually transmitted infections. This is not true.

I have heard from a patient that another doctor said it was safe to use an estrogen-based birth control method even though she had a history of blood clotting disorders. This is dangerous, and not true.

And, I have heard from teens that if a woman stays in an unhealthy relationship, she does not deserve access to help or care and that she deserves any subsequent abuse. This is simply not true.

These myths, among the many others that I have heard, are damaging because they put people at risk. Believing in these fallacies can lead people to participate in risky behaviors, leaving them susceptible to sexually transmitted infections, unintended pregnancy, or worse.

Our role as health care providers and educators at PPGOH is to help combat those myths, to give our community members accurate information and in doing so, give them the ability to make fully informed decisions regarding their bodies, their health, and their lives.

In most cases, dispelling myths simply promotes healthy behaviors. In some cases, combating these myths is life-saving. This is why our work is so important.

In addition to the aforementioned examples, there have been some new myths lately regarding the quality and integrity of Planned Parenthood's work. Even though multiple investigations have found no wrong-doing on the part of Planned Parenthood, these myths are still spread around as if they were true.

These myths, and more importantly, the use of these myths to defund PPGOH are damaging and will ultimately leave thousands of patients at risk.

We cannot allow myths about Planned Parenthood to stand as fact. We cannot allow these myths to stand as a logical reason for defunding. And, we cannot allow these myths to prevent Planned Parenthood educators and healthcare providers from doing the work in their communities that is so desperately needed. The quality of life of Ohio citizens depends on it.

Again, I am asking that you do not support HB 294; it does not have the best interest of Ohioans in mind. Thank you for your time and consideration.