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Testimony to the State of Ohio Senate Committee on Government Oversight and Reform
January 25, 2016

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.

When I was seventeen years old, after a couple of missed periods, I took an over-the-counter pregnancy test and got a positive result. I was terrified. Coming from a strict Catholic family where birth control wasn't up for discussion even in regards to menstrual cycle regulation and easing cramps, I didn't know where to turn. Thank goodness for Planned Parenthood.

After my initial panic, I recalled hearing that Planned Parenthood offered contraception, pregnancy tests and information and that you didn't have to have a parent with you when you went there. I didn't know how health insurance worked or anything about pregnancy, I just knew that I needed to go to a health professional and get a more accurate pregnancy test than the drug store offered and then I'd figure out my next step.

My boyfriend and I went to Planned Parenthood where my pregnancy was confirmed and lots of information was patiently imparted to me. One thing that I learned was that I needed to get prenatal care ASAP to insure that my baby and I were healthy. Planned Parenthood armed me with facts and information. They treated me with respect and kindness, I went in feeling like a confused, irresponsible child and I left feeling like an informed young woman, ready to take responsibility for my health, my sexuality and my pregnancy. Planned Parenthood gave me the courage to tell my parents about my pregnancy and get the proper prenatal care that I needed. It wasn't smooth or comfortable, but I felt bolstered by the knowledge that I'd gained from my appointment at Planned Parenthood.

My daughter was two weeks old at my high school graduation. She has grown into an amazing young woman and her father, my husband, and I are so grateful to Planned Parenthood for being there for us and giving us the necessary information and tools to provide a proper healthy start for our family.