



**Testimony of Jaime Miracle,  
Deputy Director for NARAL Pro-Choice Ohio,  
to the Government Oversight and Reform Committee  
Opposing House Bill 294  
January 26, 2016**

Chairman Coley, Ranking Member Yuko and members of the Government Oversight and Reform committee, my name is Jaime Miracle. I am the Deputy Director for NARAL Pro-Choice Ohio. I am here to speak in opposition to HB 294 on behalf of our more than 20,000 activists and members in Ohio.

House Bill 294 is misguided and bad public policy for the state of Ohio. Proponents of this bill have stated that cutting tens of thousands of Ohioans off from their reproductive healthcare provider of choice is a good thing. I am here today to talk about why doing so is exactly the wrong thing to do in our state. Today I will focus my testimony on the following four topics: this bill is based on wildly false accusations made by discredited organizations, we should learn from the failed Texas experiment in defunding Planned Parenthood, the language surrounding the definition of “promote” in this bill will create a public health crisis across the state, and that this is an inefficient use of our Ohio tax dollars.

This attack on Planned Parenthood is a result of several videos, produced by a group founded by anti-abortion extremists. These videos have been proven false by several independent investigations<sup>1,2</sup> and even our own Attorney General cleared Planned Parenthood in Ohio of any unlawful acts. Yesterday a grand jury in Houston, Texas that was charged with investigating the fetal tissue donation practices of Planned Parenthood handed down indictments based on their investigation. What crimes did they find that Planned Parenthood had committed? None. Not one indictment was filed against Planned Parenthood. They were cleared of all accusations. Who was indicted? The founder of the “Center for Medical Progress,” David Daleiden, and his employee, Sandra Merritt<sup>3</sup>. The creators of these false videos were the ones who broke the law, not Planned Parenthood. But here we are, back in this hearing room once again for more hearings on defunding a trusted provider of medical care in our state.

When did it become OK to base our public policy on false accusations made by people who broke the law? Why are we here discussing a bill based on ideas promoted by extremists who have spent time in federal prison for attempted fire bombings of abortion clinics<sup>4</sup>? Late last year, one of the board members for the organization behind the videos was denied an entry visa from Australia because the Australian government felt that he could possibly incite violence against abortion providers in their country<sup>5</sup>.

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<sup>1</sup> <http://www.cnn.com/2015/08/27/politics/planned-parenthood-videos-congress-report/>

<sup>2</sup> [http://www.nytimes.com/2015/08/28/us/abortion-planned-parenthood-videos.html?\\_r=0](http://www.nytimes.com/2015/08/28/us/abortion-planned-parenthood-videos.html?_r=0)

<sup>3</sup> [http://www.nytimes.com/2016/01/26/us/2-abortion-foes-behind-planned-parenthood-videos-are-indicted.html?\\_r=0](http://www.nytimes.com/2016/01/26/us/2-abortion-foes-behind-planned-parenthood-videos-are-indicted.html?_r=0)

<sup>4</sup> <http://rhrealitycheck.org/article/2015/07/17/board-member-behind-planned-parenthood-video-close-ties-abortion-clinic-violence/>

<sup>5</sup> [http://www.dispatch.com/content/stories/national\\_world/2015/10/04/nwr-1004-grb13ns5u-1.html](http://www.dispatch.com/content/stories/national_world/2015/10/04/nwr-1004-grb13ns5u-1.html), <https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/post-nation/wp/2015/10/02/u-s-anti-abortion-activist-troy-newman-to-be-deported-from-australia/>

It doesn't matter how you feel about abortion, violence against doctors and clinics should never be tolerated. Embracing the talking points and policies of anti-choice extremist groups to create policy is not how we should be doing things in this esteemed building.

In previous hearings on Senate Bill 214 you heard testimony from the Charlotte Lozier Institute about how Texas "successfully" defunded Planned Parenthood and more women than ever are now getting care. This couldn't be further from the truth. Taking data from a report published by the Texas Health and Human Services Commission in 2015, there was a 9.1% decrease in the number of women served by the program meaning 18,000 fewer women are getting access to the care they need<sup>6</sup>. In some areas of Texas the number of women served by the program decreased by more than 60%<sup>6</sup>. When you look at their data on services provided, the number of claims for contraceptives went from 191,159 in 2011, before they excluded Planned Parenthood from the program, to 88,281 in 2013, representing a 54% decrease<sup>6</sup>. All of this was happening while the number of Texas women in need of publicly supported family planning services increased by 34%, representing 1.7 million individuals<sup>7</sup>. Additionally this Texas experiment has not been a good investment for the state. Because the program serves fewer women, in 2013, Texas saw a 67% decline in net savings from family planning<sup>8</sup>.

How anyone can look at these numbers and call the Texas experiment with defunding Planned Parenthood a success is beyond me. While the need for the program grew by 34%, the program is now serving 18,000 fewer women and saw a 54% decrease in the numbers of contraceptives provided. This is a disaster for the women of Texas, and a disaster that could have been completely avoided if their state had not gone on a witch-hunt attacking the services provided by Planned Parenthood. This is a path that Ohio should not follow.

For a minute let us put aside the stated goal of this bill, to defund Planned Parenthood and limit their ability to provide critical health care services for Ohioans, and look at what the actual impact of this bill will be. Because of the way the bill is worded, it does so much more than impact Planned Parenthood's bottom line. This bill could cripple Ohio's public health system by cutting funds to the very health care providers that supporters of this bill identify as the ones who will be able to step in and provide care if Planned Parenthood facilities close.

In House Bill 294 funding is prohibited from going to anyone who provides nontherapeutic abortions, promotes nontherapeutic abortions or who contracts or affiliates with someone who provides or promotes nontherapeutic abortions. The definition of promote is "to advocate for, assist with, encourage, or popularize through advertising or publicity."

I think we can all agree that insurance coverage for abortion services would fit the definition of "assist with." NARAL Pro-Choice Ohio follows our values and offers our employees health insurance that covers both therapeutic and nontherapeutic (as defined by the State of Ohio) abortion care. We are insured through Anthem Blue Cross and Blue Shield, one of this nation's largest insurance carriers. Therefore

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<sup>6</sup> Texas Women's Health Program: Savings and Performance Reporting. Published by the Texas Health and Human Services Commission, January 2015. <http://www.hhsc.state.tx.us/reports/2015/tx-womens-health-program-rider-44-report.pdf>

<sup>7</sup> <http://www.guttmacher.org/pubs/win/contraceptive-needs-2012.pdf>

<sup>8</sup> Texas Women's Health Program: Savings and Performance Reporting. Published by the Texas Health and Human Services Commission, January 2015. <http://www.hhsc.state.tx.us/reports/2015/tx-womens-health-program-rider-44-report.pdf>

Anthem Blue Cross and Blue Shield would be an entity that “assists with” abortion services under HB 294. HB 294 prohibits any ODH funds from going to an entity that contracts with an entity that “promotes” non-therapeutic abortion. Therefore, when a local health department contracts with Anthem Blue Cross and Blue Shield to get reimbursed for services to vaccinate a six month old baby against the measles, that local health department would be contracting with an entity that this body has decided “promotes” non-therapeutic abortion. Because of this bill, that health department will have to choose between not getting reimbursed for health care services provided or losing hundreds of thousands of dollars in funding from the Ohio Department of Health.

In fact, according to data provided by the Ohio Department of Health, cities like Columbus and Cleveland could loose between 1.5 and 1.9 million dollars of funding each year. Are members of this committee really ready to force your local health department to choose between billing insurance and continuing to get funds from ODH to provide critical services to the people in the communities you serve? Are you so determined to score political points to placate your base before a primary election that you are willing to put the healthcare of hundreds of thousands of Ohioans at risk? This example is just one of many that I could provide to you today. For so many reasons the language around “promote” is a public health crisis just waiting to happen in our state.

Something else that has been lost in this conversation is how these programs operate, how the grants are awarded, and how the money is tracked to ensure that the goals of the program are being fulfilled by the grant awardees. All of the programs targeted by this defunding bill are grants awarded based on who is the best organization to provide the services outlined by the program. It isn't that Planned Parenthood is just automatically granted the funds just because they apply. Planned Parenthood and any other provider across the state can apply for a grant, the grants are scored at the Ohio Department of Health, and the highest scoring grants in the areas targeted by the program are awarded. If these “other providers” that the proponents of this bill keep mentioning really are a better place for people to go for care then these providers should apply for the grants and see what happens. The Ohio Senate should not be in the business of telling state agencies that they should not be giving money to the best organization for the job but to the one that fits a political agenda of individual politicians.

Once the grants are awarded, budgets must contain specific line items for each expenditure. They must all be deemed “allowable” by the granting agency. In order for any funds to be distributed to the grantee, a specific contract must be signed with all parties to be paid, the contract amounts must match what is in the approved budget, and finally a reimbursement check is issued to the organization. Organizations are not issued a blank check to be used however they feel fit. All funds are tightly controlled.

I know I have covered a lot of territory in this testimony today, and I appreciate the attention of the committee members. Let me summarize as I conclude. Legislation based on potentially criminal activities of individuals lodging wildly false accusations should not be the basis of legislation in this esteemed body, especially when you are proposing to follow the lead of states like Texas that have failed to provide the replacements for these critical health care services. The public health of our citizens should be the number one concern of this body, and the unclear and imprecise language contained in this legislation does the exact opposite. It wastes our taxpayer dollars in order to accomplish scoring political points at the expense of the Ohioans who need access to care. For these reasons and so many others I urge you to vote no on HB 294. Defunding is bad for Ohio's women, bad for Ohio families, and bad for our state's future.

