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

I grew up in a small town in Ohio,

Since 1999, I have been working with Planned Parenthood as an educator. First, through my position as an AmeriCorps volunteer, second, as the coordinator of an afterschool program that focused on pregnancy prevention for urban Appalachian girls in East Dayton, third, as a community educator that took me into schools through an ODH granted VAWA program, and finally, as the department manager. I have witnessed first-hand the impact that expertly facilitated comprehensive sexuality education can have on young people. Notice that I said “expertly facilitated” and not taught... many people think that anyone can “teach” that we do; in fact, it’s been proposed that dentist’s offices, school nurses, and crisis pregnancy centers will be on deck to take over the work that Planned Parenthood educators do all across the state, and will be able to do it just as well if not better that we do. That is a very dangerous myth- one that the committee on community and family advancement must beware of buying into. Especially because the work we do directly affects our communities and the future of our families.

Effective healthy sexuality instruction has several key components that have been rigorously studied by Douglas Kirby and were published in 2007¹. What Dr. Kirby did was reiterate the value and knowledge that Planned Parenthood educators already had and had been implementing in community groups and schools for decades. In order for sexuality education to have a positive impact on young people it must be *based in theory and research*- Planned Parenthood’s education programs are. We use what works to delay the initiation of sexual behaviors and increase condom and contraceptive use among young people who do initiate. Kirby said, *effective sexuality education programs must be consistent with community values*- for over 33 years “in survey after survey, local, state or national, 80 to 85 percent of parents indicate they want their children to receive comprehensive, medically accurate, age-appropriate sex education².” We receive overwhelming support and gratitude from parents and caregivers across the state for the work we do with young people. Effective sexuality education programs must be holistic; they must *take into consideration the multiple psychosocial risk and protective factors that affect sexual behaviors in young people*- we must facilitate conversations that realistically assess personal risk and protective factors present in our youth, personal and familial values must be explored, attitudes and perceived norms among young people can also impact sexual behaviors and decision making. Young people do not exist in a vacuum- environmental influences must be identified. Effective sexuality education *cannot be facilitated in a place where young people do not feel safe*. Many of the proposed locations to take over the work we do are shame and fear based, are judgmental, and do not operate in honest, medically accurate ways. Planned Parenthood’s educators are non-judgmental, rooted in science, and pride ourselves on age-appropriateness and medical accuracy. The most important aspect of effective

¹ Kirby, D. (2007). *Emerging Answers 2007: Research Findings on Programs to Reduce Teen Pregnancy and Sexually Transmitted Diseases*. Washington, DC: National Campaign to Prevent Teen and Unplanned Pregnancy

² Huberman, B. (October 2002). *Parents as advocates for comprehensive sex ed in schools*. Retrieved from <http://www.advocatesforyouth.org/component/content/158?task=view>

sexuality education is the *educator and the delivery* of the information. According to Kirby, young people must be able to *personalize the information*, but be able to *build skills* around prevention methods, must be able to *practice* the new skills, and must be able *build self-efficacy* in regards to overcoming boundaries. For decades, Planned Parenthood educators have known and practiced these essential components of sexuality education delivery. We are the experts in our field, we have extensive training, we have rigorous quality assurance measures, we employ learning strategies that work, we monitor the results of our programs, and we are active in our communities. Community and family advancement- we are all about that.

I urge the committee to kill HB294. It will directly go against advancing our communities and families. If HB 294 passes- it will redirect funds from Planned Parenthood's expert educators and remove the *only* comprehensive sexuality education that most young people in juvenile justice facilities and foster care youth receive. These young people are at greater risk of being sexually active and not using effective contraceptives (nearly 90% are sexually active as compared to less than 50% of their peers) and of being involved in a pregnancy (young women in foster care are two-and a half times more likely to become pregnancy). Taking the PREP dollars that support this work from Planned Parenthood will place it in the hands of agencies that know nothing of Kirby's important work, that have already dismissed these young people as throw-aways, who will not respect their experience, their autonomy or their futures. In order to ensure that our communities and families have the best chance to be healthy and successful, we must keep the funding where it belongs- in the hands of Planned Parenthood, so that we can continue to improve future outcomes for more than 3000 foster care and Juvenile justice youth across the state as we have been doing for the past four and a half years under the PREP project.

I urge the committee to kill HB 294. It will go directly against advancing our communities and families. If HB 294 passes it will redirect funds from Planned Parenthood's expert dating and sexual violence educators. For the past nine years, my Planned Parenthood affiliate has been facilitating discussions that make our families and communities healthier and safer with programs to reduce dating and sexual violence with grants from ODH through VAWA. We have reached thousands upon thousands of young people and assisted them in understanding what healthy relationships are, how to recognize dating abuse, how to prevent sexual violence, and what to do if you or your friend needs help. Healthy relationships make our families, homes, and communities safer. When we decrease the amount of violence in our young people's lives it has a direct impact on our communities right away as well as breaks the cycle of violence that can occur from generation to generation. Many of the agencies ready to step in to take over this important work support the misogynist view point that perpetuates violence against women; they are quick to reinforce gender roles and stereotypes that hurt our communities and families that teach our youth that power based personal violence is the norm and the expectation.

Planned Parenthood has got this. We've been doing this important work for our communities and families because the Ohio Department of Health identified that we were the experts, that we could do it best, that as a non-profit we can do more with less, and that we are trusted contributors to the healthy advancement of our communities and families. Let us continue the work that no one can do as well as we can. Vote NO on HB 294.