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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 am a Certified Nurse Practitioner. I used to be a Sexual Assault Nurse Examiner. I now work at the AIDS Resource Center and Village Family Medicine providing HIV prevention and sexual health education.

I started with the ARC in July. My day-to-day work is with patients who are in relationships where one is HIV positive and I also work with people who are trying to prevent HIV. I manage my own panel of patients at Village Family Medicine by providing physicals, STI testing and prescribing medicine to reduce the risk of becoming HIV positive. I send patients to Planned Parenthood every day because they offer different services that my patients need, like birth control and breast and cervical cancer screenings.

All of the programs Planned Parenthood provides are important, especially sexual health education. I was in the foster care system so I understand the need for good sexual health education, especially preventing pregnancy. These programs create change. If people don't respect themselves and their bodies, they won't get ahead in life.

Access to reproductive health care will be worse if Planned Parenthood is defunded.

I had a patient who was Hispanic and didn't speak English. I didn't have the resources at my practice to help her get a pap smear, so I connected her with Planned Parenthood. They gave her a pap smear. It was abnormal and they ending up doing a colposcopy, a further examination of the cervix, to detect cancer cells.

It would be a mistake to cut this funding. Women need a place to go to get screenings, information, and birth control, a place where they can talk about their bodies openly and honestly. We need to increase the number of cancer and STI screenings and people on birth control. If you want to improve health, then cutting this funding would be devastating and would be a giant step backward. When you cut funding, you say that women don't deserve this reproductive health access. You are also creating a barrier to access and making it more taboo. Instead of empowering women to take control of their health and their bodies, you are literally saying that politicians deserve more control over women's bodies than they do.