



TO: Ohio Senate Government Oversight and Reform Committee

FROM: Danielle Smith, MSW, MA, LSW, Executive Director

DATE: January 26, 2016

RE: Testimony in opposition to HB 294

My name is Danielle Smith and I am the executive director of the National Association of Social Workers Ohio Chapter. NASW is the largest membership organization of professional social workers with 150,000 members nationwide and nearly 4,800 members in Ohio. NASW promotes, develops, and protects the practice of social work and social workers. NASW also seeks to enhance the well-being of individuals, families, and communities through advocacy.

NASW Ohio Chapter offers the following testimony in opposition of House Bill 294. Social workers are often on the front lines with clients as they fight to keep enough food on the table, gain access to needed medications, keep their homes heated, deal with mental health issues, and many other problems that prevent a person from reaching their full potential. I would like to offer the social work voice to talk about the impact to the people we assist if you go through with defunding Planned Parenthood. Denying people with low-income access to the full range of contraceptive methods, STI screenings and treatment, health care services, and the educational programs that explain them, perpetuate poverty and the dependence on welfare programs.

The NASW Code of Ethics states that “social workers respect and promote the right of clients to self-determination.” This means that a person should, without government interference, be able to make decisions about reproductive and sexual health. To support self-determination, all reproductive services should be available, including contraception, abortion, preventative services like breast and cervical screenings, and comprehensive sexuality education. These services need to be economically feasible and geographically accessible. This bill takes away both of those things. Forty-one counties in Ohio have no family planning clinics. Do you know for certain that the providers who will be left after Planned Parenthood is eliminated can manage the increase of patients who will come to their facilities in place of the other family planning clinics? When you are talking about STD screenings, cancer screenings and OBGYN care, two or more weeks can be the difference between identifying cancer early and not soon enough. It can be the difference between a STD affecting future fertility and catching it before it causes irrecoverable harm to the body.

Social workers will deal with the consequences of this bill. They will be stretched even more thin to find new ways to serve the clients who can no longer access care through Planned Parenthood. They will make an exhausting number of calls with clients in an attempt to find affordable STI testing or mammogram services on top of an already too-large caseload. They will spend late night hours pulling together an improvised sex education class to fill in for the Planned Parenthood educators that are no longer there, all the while knowing that their best attempt won't near the effectiveness of what Planned Parenthood used to offer. And more often than not when social workers can't find anything to offer to

their clients when Planned Parenthood is gone, they will be exasperated, frustrated, and angry as they tell their clients that there isn't anywhere for them to go for their basic health care.

My members, our state's social workers, will do their best to do whatever they can to pick up the pieces of what this bill will create. We will do everything we can as we have done for years working in an underfunded system to help our state's most vulnerable people. We want to remind you that Ohio's economic and political environment continues to struggle. According to the Public Children Services Association of Ohio, 15% of Ohioans receive food stamps, and 25% are insured by Medicaid, 11% of whom are children, and Medicaid pays for one in three births. Forty-two percent of Ohio school children are on the federal free or reduced-price meal program. Waiting times for essential mental health services can be as long as three to six. Food pantry lines are increasing and homeless shelters are full. These problems deserve our full-attention and effort. Your focus, my focus, our focus should be on prevention. This bill does the exact opposite. We owe it to our children, women in this state, and families.

Thank you for your time and attention.

Respectively submitted,
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