

Testimony of Erika Boothman, MPH  
Medical Student at Ohio State University  
Opposing House Bill 294  
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My name is Erika Boothman. I am a fourth-year medical student at The Ohio State University College of Medicine and I am specializing in obstetrics and gynecology. I hold a Masters in Public Health from Johns Hopkins University.

I am a member of the Ohio State University Medical Students for Choice and I am here to speak in opposition of Senate Bill 294.

Before I begin, I want to make it clear that, even without this bill, no state or federal money goes toward abortion in Ohio. This bill has largely been advertised as a way to restrict abortion, but because public funds aren't used for abortion in Ohio, passing this bill would only affect the non-abortion services that Planned Parenthood offers; services like STD screening and treatment, birth control, and programs to reduce Ohio's abysmal infant mortality rate.

Last year, I taught a sex education class to thirty low-income seventh grade girls, all of whom were African American. They knew astonishingly little about their body; many of them did not know basic male and female anatomy. These young people were at high risk of sexual abuse and coercion into sexual activity.

During one of the sessions, we asked the girls if they knew where they could go for STD and pregnancy testing and resources for intimate partner violence. Although the area in which I was teaching had a university hospital with an adolescent clinic and multiple free-standing non-Planned Parenthood clinics, every single girl answered with a confident "Planned Parenthood!"

Black women ages 15-24 make up only 1% of Ohio's population, but they account for 21% of chlamydia infections and 25% of the gonorrhea infections in Ohio.<sup>1</sup> This is a race issue. Passing House Bill 294 would only exacerbate these health disparities.

By cutting funding to Planned Parenthood, you would be restricting health care access to the most marginalized people in Ohio. Defunding an organization that served nearly 80,000 Ohioans last year would disproportionately affect girls like the ones I taught.<sup>1</sup> These are not girls who can simply call up their primary care doctor, have their mother drive them to their appointment, and direct the bill to insurance. Many of Planned Parenthood's patients live below the poverty line. Many of them are African American. This bill is not targeting abortion; Ohio and federal law already forbids that.<sup>2,3</sup> This bill targets women who already have minimal access to healthcare, girls like the ones I taught. House Bill 294 discriminates both against low-income women and African American women and I urge you to vote against it. Thank you.

## References

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<sup>1</sup> Ohio Department of Health STD Surveillance Program 2013. "Chlamydia and Gonorrhea Infections Among 15-24 Year Olds"

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Downloaded from: <https://www.odh.ohio.gov/healthstats/disease/std/std1.aspx>

<sup>2</sup> State Fundings of Abortion Under Medicaid,

Downloaded from: <http://kff.org/medicaid/state-indicator/abortion-under-medicaid/>

<sup>3</sup> ACLU Public Funding for Abortion

Downloaded from: <https://www.aclu.org/public-funding-abortion>