

Buxi Iacobone
Columbus, OH

**Testimony to the State of Ohio Senate Committee on Government Oversight and Reform
January 25, 2016**

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.

Good morning. My name is Buxi, and I am a patient-turned-volunteer-turned-employee at Planned Parenthood. And today, I am disappointed.

This is far from my first visit to the Ohio Statehouse. I've been coming frequently for a few years now to give testimony on sexual health and rights, shaped by my perspective as a young Ohio woman with reproductive health issues. They say that the squeaky wheel gets the grease, but I don't find that to be true. I don't feel like I've been heard at all.

I've been listening to you, though. I've been watching and listening to the legislation put forth at the Statehouse, and here is what I have heard:

When bills are crafted to defund Planned Parenthood, I hear that getting my pap smear to screen for pre-cancerous cells after I was diagnosed with HPV – which at that time I could only afford at Planned Parenthood – is not important to you.

When bills are crafted to defund Planned Parenthood, I hear that the patients I serve – the Ohioans who flock to my workplace every day, and thank me with tears in their eyes for being present for them in their moment of need – are not important to you.

When bills are crafted to defund Planned Parenthood, I think back to an incident in my own life when I was sexually assaulted by a close friend, and did not realize it was an assault until many months later. I think about how embarrassed I felt for taking so long to assign words to this strange, ambiguous event that had brought me such discomfort. I think about how ridiculous it is that, upon finally realizing that I had been assaulted, “embarrassment” was the first thing I felt. I think about Planned Parenthood's educational programs on healthy relationships and domestic violence, and how they can spare so many young people from the nauseating emotional roller coaster I rode after my assault. And when bills are crafted to slash funding for these initiatives, what I hear is that I, along with the countless vulnerable students in these incredible programs, am not important to you.

Please tell me something different. Vote NO on House Bill 294, and tell me that I am important to you. Tell me that I matter. I am listening.