



**Testimony before the House Committee on Health
Judi Wolf on behalf of the Coalition for Family Health
Wednesday, November 18, 2009**

Good afternoon, Chairwoman Boyd and Members of the Health Committee.

My name is Judi Wolf and I am Ohio State Public Affairs Chair of the National Council of Jewish Women. For more than a century, the National Council of Jewish Women—or NCJW—has been a courageous advocate for women, children, and families while taking a progressive stance on such issues as child welfare, women’s rights, and reproductive freedom. Across Ohio, more than 5,000 women form one of the largest and most active NCJW state assemblies in the United States.

The National Council of Jewish women is proud to serve as the convening organization for the Coalition for Family Health—and it is on behalf of the Coalition for Family Health that I appear before you this afternoon.

The Coalition for Family Health is a statewide alliance of organizations committed to the urgent healthcare needs of Ohio’s women, children, and families.

We are a broad-based coalition currently composed of thirty-five Ohio organizations representing rural, urban, and suburban Ohio; women and men; young and old. Our growing member roster encompasses groups ranging from those that serve a statewide constituency—for example, the National Association of Social Workers Ohio Chapter—to those that operate within a single neighborhood, like Neighborhood Family Practice, on the west side of Cleveland. A complete listing of the membership of the Coalition for Family Health is attached to the end of my testimony.

We are business women, child advocates, local public health departments, persons of faith, rape crisis service providers, medical professionals, and an incredibly diverse amalgamation of Ohio voters unified by our commitment to public policies and practices that promote the prevention of unintended pregnancies and sexually transmitted infections and diseases.

Together, we intend to improve the lives of all Ohioans by ensuring access to services, products, and education that are vital to the health and well-being of individuals, families, and communities. And that is why we support the comprehensive Prevention First legislation that Representative Yates has introduced--House Bill 293-- as well as the recently-introduced stand-alone bills focused on Compassionate Assistance for Rape Emergencies (CARE), contraceptive equity, and comprehensive sex education.

According to the Centers for Disease Control, 49% of all pregnancies in the United States—nearly one-half of all American pregnancies--are unintended. Within this context, an unintended pregnancy is either mistimed (the woman wanted to be pregnant later) or undesired (she did not want to ever be pregnant). The economic and social costs of this crisis defy calculation—and they are known all too well by the members of this coalition, whose unique connections to the negative impacts of unintended pregnancy and sexually-transmitted infections and diseases demonstrate the depth and the diversity of this phenomenon’s challenges.

Indeed, the negative impacts and the challenges associated with unintended pregnancies and sexually-transmitted infections and diseases are significant.

And, they are, by and large, preventable.

Prevention First offers a practical, viable antidote to the epidemic of unintended pregnancies. It provides for affordable birth control and appropriate health education. It encourages responsible behavior. Prevention First will reduce teen pregnancy. It will lessen the demand for abortion. And it will save taxpayers money.

We know that there are Ohioans throughout the state and in every house district who share our commitment—and our desire to work together to address this public health crisis. Prevention First offers a commonsense, common-ground approach—an approach on which persons of diverse beliefs and convictions can agree.

The Coalition for Family Health aims to join the voices of likeminded Ohioans representing every community and all walks of life to:

- Secure passage of comprehensive Prevention First legislation and
- Ensure access to the services, the products, and the education on which the health and the future of our entire state depends.

And, with this urgent goal, the 35 member organizations of the Coalition for Family Health, which I represent this afternoon, respectfully urge this Committee to send HB 293 to the full House for debate without delay.

Thank you.



ACTION OHIO: Coalition for Battered Women
AIDS Taskforce of Greater Cleveland
American Association of University Women/OH
The American Civil Liberties Union of Ohio
Butler County Rape Crisis Program
CareSource
The Center for Community Solutions
Children's Defense Fund Ohio
Cleveland Department of Public Health
Cleveland Rape Crisis Center
Community Health Access Project
Cuyahoga County Board of Health
The Domestic Violence Shelter, Inc.
Equality Ohio
Family Planning Services of Lorain County
Family Planning Association of Northeast Ohio, Inc.
Galion City Health Department
Harmony Project
League of Women Voters of Ohio
Lucas County PlainTalk Program
Middletown Health Department
NARAL Pro-Choice Ohio
National Council of Jewish Women
National Association of Social Workers, OH Chapter
Neighborhood Family Practice
Northeastern Ohio Universities College of Medicine Medical Students for Choice
Ohio Federation of Business and Professional Women
Ohio National Organization for Women
Ohio NOW Education and Legal Fund
Ohio Religious Coalition for Reproductive Choice
Partners for Successful Youth, Committee of The Lucas County Family Council
Planned Parenthood Affiliates of Ohio
Public Children Services Association of Ohio
Southern Ohio Sexuality Education & Consultation Services
Voices for Ohio's Children