



STAR LEGACY
FOUNDATION
Ohio Chapter

March 13th, 2018

The Honorable Tim Schaffer, Chairman
Ohio Ways & Means Committee
77 South High Street
Columbus, OH 43215

Re: H.B. 507 Grant Refundable Tax Credit to Parents of Stillborn Child

Thank you Chairman Schaffer, Vice Chair Scherer, ranking member Rogers, and committee members for the opportunity to speak in support of House Bill 507 concerning a tax credit for parents of stillborn children. As both a bereaved father and a board member of the Ohio Chapter of the Star Legacy Foundation, I am grateful for the committee's consideration of this bill.

The Star Legacy Foundation is a national non-profit dedicated to reducing the occurrence of perinatal and neonatal death, as well as improving care provided to families that experience such tragedies. Stillbirth, defined as the death of an infant before or during delivery at 20 or more completed weeks of gestation, is alarmingly common although rarely addressed publicly. Approximately 900 stillbirths per year occur in Ohio, a rate that has remained unchanged for the last 15 years, ranking Ohio 7th in the nation in the number of stillbirths annually. The Star Legacy Foundation believes that many stillbirths are preventable, and through increased awareness, education, and partnerships we can empower families and health care professionals to identify and protect vulnerable babies.

We also believe that where stillbirth cannot be prevented, families deserve the best possible support from their medical professionals and communities. The current tax structure lacks financial parity – a baby born at 17 weeks with a heartbeat is given a birth certificate and the parents can claim them as a dependent for that year, however, a baby born at 41 weeks that dies during birth does not qualify for a birth certificate. The harsh truth is that a child that never takes a breath is not recognized as a person, is not covered by insurance, and cannot be claimed as a dependent under the current tax law. Beyond the overwhelming grief, stillbirth carries with it a financial burden, with expenses often reaching totals that exceed \$15,000 and can include the cost of autopsy, funeral, burial or cremation expenses, missed work time, and counseling. With your support, House Bill 507 will allow Ohio families who have lost a child to stillbirth the opportunity to offset a portion of these unexpected costs. However, beyond the money and more importantly, this is an opportunity to recognize and support thousands of grieving Ohio families that have experienced, or will experience, this tragic loss.

If passed, Ohio would become the 7th state to allow a tax credit for parents of stillborn children, with similar legislation already in place in Arizona, Michigan, Indiana, Missouri, Minnesota, and North Dakota. It is my hope that Ohio can join these states in becoming a leader in stillbirth research and support.

On behalf of all Ohio families of stillborn children, I respectfully urge you to enact House Bill 507. Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

Justin Welliver
Secretary, Ohio Chapter of the Star Legacy Foundation
Resident of Westerville, OH