



April 30, 2019

Dear Chairman **Oelslager**, Vice Chair **Scherer**, Ranking Member **Cera**, and members of the committee,

Thank you for allowing me to testify on **House Bill 166**. I am the founder and Exec. Director of Elizabeth's New Life Center, which operates seven Women's Centers [Pregnancy Resource Centers] in southwest Ohio. We are celebrating our 30th year this year. Elizabeth's New Life Center (ENLC) was awarded and is currently receiving funding from the Ohio Parenting and Pregnancy Program (OPP). We have been able to provide incredible services to at-risk pregnant women with the help of OPP funding and want to ask that **INCREASED** Ohio Parenting and Pregnancy funding be made available in the Ohio Budget. Last budget period the funding was at \$1M per biennium and we are recommending it be increased to \$5M. The reason for this is that very few pregnancy centers are able to receive funding at the current level; more importantly perhaps is that this increase fits totally into Governor's DeWine initiatives to improve the wellbeing of Children throughout Ohio. In fact, it could easily be increased to \$10M and still only scratch the surface of the services provided by mostly faith-based pregnancy centers in Ohio.

With OPP funding, we have tested and served with love over 3,700 TANF-eligible clients in 2018 who are pregnant or have a child under 12 months old; of those tested,

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94% were pregnant. We also provided prenatal vitamins to nearly 2000 women and provided almost 3500 free ultrasound scans! We are the largest pregnancy center in Ohio and because so many low-income women come to us early in their pregnancies, we are in a unique position to encourage early prenatal care, which in turn reduces infant mortality. Through a grant from Premier Health in Ohio we are also able to offer follow up services to help women access ours as well as other prenatal care providers throughout Montgomery County; with increased funding we could expand this program to other counties in SW Ohio.

With OPP funding, we have initiated educational series including: Prenatal Development, Drinking and Pregnancy, Infant CPR, Childhood Immunizations, Postpartum Depression, and The Effects of Trauma. These classes are in addition to and compliment the one-on-one mentoring currently provided at our women's centers, called Earn While You Learn. Incentives (*Baby Bucks*) offered at both group classes and individual mentoring sessions assist low income women and their partners gather much-needed supplies and baby equipment to create a safe environment for their infants. Services continue after birth as well, so that families can successfully address parenting challenges and continue to "earn" supplies and equipment at no cost to them. Clients have been able to earn diapers, car seats, strollers, pack-n-plays, high chairs, and even cribs. We have six Boutiques which are fully stocked at all times

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through the generosity of churches and ministry partners throughout SW Ohio. It is set up as a token economy in order to add dignity and the value of earning what you need for your family as important life lessons for these challenged families. More importantly the multiple classes offered in all of our centers equip our new parents with the skills needed to become successful parents.

Believing early and accessible prenatal care is the key to reducing infant mortality, ENLC offers excellent and comprehensive prenatal care on site at our Dayton location to Medicaid-eligible women as well as in partnership with our ministry partner Healthy Beginnings in one of our Cincinnati offices. We offer wrap-around support services from our social worker who provides counseling, social services and referrals; and our perinatal nurse educator provides individualized health instruction and group education classes. Our goal is for patients to start care during the first trimester and continue care for 10 or more visits during the pregnancy in order to improve birth outcomes. We take great pride that our Prenatal Care Office has demonstrated consistently better (lower) rates of preterm deliveries and low birth weight babies as compared to Montgomery and Hamilton Counties and Ohio rates.

I thank you for the opportunity to share the good work of Elizabeth's New Life Center and Healthy Beginnings in reducing infant mortality and helping low-income pregnant

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and parenting families succeed. I ask for the appropriation to expand funding for the Ohio Parenting and Pregnancy Program to serve even more families in the coming years.

Vivian Koob, Executive Director and Founder

Elizabeth's New Life Center

With seven Women's Centers in Hamilton, Montgomery, Shelby and Warren Counties