

House Health Committee
May 28, 2019
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Cleveland, Ohio

Chairman Merrin, Ranking Member Boyd, and Members of the House Health Committee,

Good morning, my name is Katy Maistros. I reside in Cleveland, District 13, and am a constituent of Representative Michael Skindell. I am an Advanced Practice Registered Nurse and Certified Nurse Midwife, serving as Associate Medical Director of midwifery at Neighborhood Family Practice, a Community Health Center with six locations on Cleveland's west side. I am here today to testify in support of HB 11.

First, allow me to thank Co-Sponsors Manning and Howse for bringing forward this important bill. We are grateful to the leadership of both caucuses for recognizing the essential nature of the work to combat infant and maternal mortality in the state. We support all four elements of HB 11-smoking cessation, dental hygiene, lead education, and group pre-natal care.

As a patient centered medical home (PCMH), Neighborhood Family Practice uses a team-based approach to deliver high quality, affordable primary and preventive health care to the most economically vulnerable members of our community- ensuring that everyone has access to care, regardless of ability to pay. In 2018, Neighborhood Family Practice provided primary care, women's health and midwifery services, behavioral health, dental, and case management services to more than 19,000 patients at our combined locations.

Today, I am excited to share why group prenatal care programs are so important to my patients, my community and all of Ohio. Neighborhood Family Practice has provided CenteringPregnancy group prenatal care for nine years. CenteringPregnancy, an innovative and exciting method of group prenatal care, is an evidence-based strategy which brings together women with similar due dates in a supportive learning environment. Prenatal care that combines the medical appointment, education and support is provided in a series of group sessions.

Since 2011, Neighborhood Family Practice has provided group prenatal care to 498 women through our CenteringPregnancy program. Our outcomes show that women who attend group prenatal care have fewer preterm births and higher breastfeeding rates. In 2018, just 3% of Neighborhood Family Practice's CenteringPregnancy program participants delivered low birth weight and/or premature babies, versus 11% of babies born in Cuyahoga County and 14% of those born in Cleveland*. And, 93% (51/67) of Neighborhood Family Practice participants were breastfeeding their newborns at discharge from hospital. We know these two measures are very important in preventing infant mortality.

*The Center for Community Solutions

The other important measure for preventing infant mortality is to decrease the stress of pregnancy by increasing support from others and from the community. CenteringPregnancy provides both protections and therefore promotes full term healthy births, decreasing risk of infant mortality and other complications, and cost of pregnancy and child birth care. Full term babies have shorter hospital stays and are able to go home with their parents shortly after birth, decreasing cost of nursery and neonatal intensive care.

Neighborhood Family Practice is a leader for First Year Cleveland, a program funded by the Ohio Department of Health and Ohio Department of Medicaid to address infant mortality, premature births/low birth weight, and the racial disparity between black and white babies. As a trained CenteringPregnancy provider, I and my colleagues work with other organizations in Northeast Ohio to help establish CenteringPregnancy programs.

As a provider of prenatal care for over 15 years, I have seen first-hand how group prenatal care support can increase engagement in health behavior changes and empower families to be informed and prepared for parenting. Written testimony in support of HB 11 was provided by Neighborhood Family Practice patient, Sarah Fallon, and beautifully illustrates the value of group prenatal care from the perspective of a woman who participated in CenteringPregnancy during both of her pregnancies. Often, the community of participants come together to support each other long after their pregnancies and friendships develop. These participants are creating community and increasing the health and well-being of their families and our neighborhoods.

Again, thank you for your attention on this important topic. Additional funding for group prenatal care is needed and has demonstrated significant benefit and improved outcomes. I would be happy to answer any questions.