

**House Bill 11 proponent testimony**  
**May 28, 2019**  
**Tiffany Krauss, MSN, RN**

Chair Merrin, Vice Chair Manning, Ranking Member Boyd, and Members of the House Health Committee, I am Tiffany Krauss, Administrator of the Clinical Health Division at Columbus Public Health. I am here on behalf of the Health Commissioner, Dr. Mysheika W. Roberts, our public health nurses, social workers, community health workers, and the nearly 850,000 Columbus and Worthington residents we serve. CPH is part of the Ohio Better Birth Outcomes (OBBO) collaborative with our four hospital systems and PrimaryOne Health which is dedicated to reducing the infant mortality rate in Franklin County by improving the delivery of health care services for women and their families and we support HB 11.

First, allow me to thank the bill's co-sponsors, Representatives Manning and Howse, for bringing forward this important legislation. 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.

Today, I would like to discuss why group pre-natal care programs are so important to my community. Columbus Public Health is the largest provider of home visiting in Franklin County, serving nearly 800 women per year. Home visiting has been rigorously evaluated and shown to improve child health, school readiness, parenting practices and even parental educational attainment and income.

By addressing the four elements of HB 11, I am confident that Ohio will take a positive step in the direction of reduction infant and maternal mortality.

**Dental hygiene**

Requiring Medicaid to cover dental cleanings is a positive step towards de-compartmentalizing the health of the mouth from the health of the entire body. Poor oral health can cause considerable pain and suffering and changes what people eat, their speech and their quality of life and well-being. Poor oral health can also contribute to the development of chronic diseases. CPH has firsthand knowledge of this through our dental clinic, where emergency dental services are provided. Moving from requiring one cleaning to two cleanings is helpful and we are hopeful will reduce the need for emergency dental services.

**Group pre-natal care**

Funding for existing and new evidence- and outcome-based group care programs is crucial. In Columbus, prenatal well visits in group settings give women the opportunity to learn about health pregnancies, social/emotional health care support, and a social network that enables women to be more prepared for health pregnancies and early motherhood.

Columbus focuses on CenteringPregnancy, which provides prenatal checkups, risk assessments, education and advice, support from providers and mothers-to-be. Research has shown that CenteringPregnancy prenatal care reduces risk of premature birth by 36 percent, increased birth weights, increases rates of breastfeeding and reduces risk of gestational diabetes.



**Lead education**

CPH is very happy to see the inclusion of lead education materials for pregnant mothers who live in dwellings built before 1979 for those in the Help Me Grow home visiting program.

Small amounts of lead can cause learning and behavioral problems in children as this metal replaces iron and calcium in the body and particularly the nervous system. Young children are especially susceptible to lead poisoning because a growing body absorbs the metal very easily. At low levels of poisoning, lead lowers IQ scores, causes attention disorders, delays and/or stunts growth, impairs hearing; and at worst to can lead to coma and death.

CPH supports the inclusion of lead education materials, and encourages strengthening of Ohio's laws and programming around lead remediation.

**Tobacco cessation**

By requiring Medicaid health plans to cover all FDA-approved tobacco cessation medications and therapies, CPH believes this will undoubtedly improve infant mortality outcomes. In no uncertain terms, smoking, whether pregnant or not, is one of the most harmful health behaviors a person can engage in. Smoking while pregnant increases the likelihood of miscarriage, premature delivery, stillbirth and low birth weights. Minimizing the prevalence of smoking in society, is a laudable and paramount goal of policymakers and public health officials.

Again, thank you for working on this important topic, and we encourage your full support and speedy passage of HB 11. I am happy to answer any questions you may have.

If you have any questions after today's hearing, please contact our Director of Public Health Policy at [edjohnson@columbus.gov](mailto:edjohnson@columbus.gov) or (614) 645-7284. Thank you for your time and attention to this important public health issue.