

Chairman Merrin, Vice Chair LaRe, Ranking Member Rogers and members of the House Ways and Means Committee, thank you for the opportunity to present proponent witness testimony on House Bill 297. This bill authorizes a 50% income tax credit, for a taxpayer's cash contribution to qualifying non-profit Pregnancy Resource Centers, if they have a state tax liability.

My name is Vivian Koob and I am the founder and executive director of Elizabeth's New Life Center serving Southwest Ohio; our organization is 30 years old this year. At Elizabeth's New Life Center we operate six (soon to be seven) Women's Centers. Since you have already heard from our Director of Women's Centers, Meg Carnahan, about those services, let me explain what else we do:

1. We operate a full prenatal care clinic where two physicians and six midwives work with our patients to deliver excellent and early prenatal care. Since most of our patients are referred from our Women's Centers, we are able to begin prenatal care very early in their pregnancy, just after they have a positive pregnancy test. From when we started offering prenatal care in 2000, we have achieved excellent rates of preterm deliveries and low birth weight babies, consistently lower than state and county averages. Preterm birth and low birth weight are within the top three causes of infant mortality, which makes these results especially significant since we serve a socially high risk population and all are on Medicaid.
2. We have a several programs to promote healthy relationships and encourage two parent families organized under our Marriage Works Ohio department. Last year we served nearly 10,000 students in a broad area of Southwest Ohio teaching relationship skills and healthy boundaries. These presentations are 5-9 days long and are received excellently by both the schools and students.

I have heard opponent testimony to this committee labeling pregnancy resource centers like us as FAKE clinics and people who lie to women. Let me assure you that we are anything but fake and we never lie to women. We have medical board certified professional doctors overseeing all we do and they review all of our materials to see that they are medically accurate. We have a total of 28 credentialed medical professionals who work in our organization These are the paid staff but we also have many others including three additional board certified radiologists who read all of our ultrasound scans as volunteers. **What we do not do is promote or refer for abortion.** We are grounded in natural law, which is supported by our faith beliefs, that ALL LIFE is precious and that each human person should be treated with the respect and dignity they deserve as children of our creator. For this we make no apologies and are proud to have served over 15,000 individuals with over 51,000 services last year alone saving the state well over \$2M just from our PRC alone.

Women and families in SW OH have received an average of \$2k in free material assistance including cribs, playpen, strollers, diapers and other essential baby supplies. In addition, we provide over 150 classes on such things as parenting, nutrition, smoking and alcohol cessation

classes, domestic violence prevention, preventing child abuse, budgeting, use of credit cards, and many other topics.

Besides our consultants, we have educators, social workers, nurses, doctors and other professionals such as RDMS ultrasound techs who work for us as one of our 70 employees. We use not only paid workers but also volunteers in many capacities such as mentor moms and dads who walk alongside vulnerable families until they no longer need our help. Our organization has over 240 community volunteers. Our centers use in-kind donations such as gifts through churches, businesses and individuals who want to help these vulnerable families in ways that are respectful of their personal dignity. As an example our Baby Bucks which are given very liberally in all of our classes allows the women to shop for what they need in a dignified and respectful manner in any of our five Mother and Baby Boutiques. This free market system or token economy allows them to decide what they need and if they want to buy something new which costs more baby bucks or if they want to buy something which is gently used and stretch their baby bucks.

I want to address an issue that was raised earlier regarding the allegation of racism in our centers. Nothing could be further from the truth. We have a very culturally competent staff which is represented by African Americans, Latinos and other minorities on our staff and board. Our employees are frequently provided with cultural competence and other types of in-service training programs to enable us to be as up to date as possible on these issues. I myself am the mother of 4 African-American children and have 13 African-American grandchildren, 6 of whom live in my home. I would be aghast if any of our staff had any degree of racial bias or provided any degree of racial disparity and it would not be tolerated in our organization.

The clients served in our Women's Centers are primarily young (48% are younger than 25); unmarried (73.1%); low income (66% reported annual incomes less than \$15,000; and undereducated (39% reported no education beyond a high school diploma or GED, and an additional 9% had either dropped out or were currently in high school or junior high); and minority (57%) with (39%) being African-America.

Some have asked why PRC's would get this tax credit and not other organizations like hospitals? PRC's are generally funded by private individuals who have a deep concern for the health and wellbeing of both the mothers we serve as well as the babies they are carrying. This is a very positive way to let those very generous individual donors know that the work of the PRC's is highly valued in the state of OH. We have a Governor who has made the welfare of children a very high priority in his administration. This initiative fits very well with those priorities which are shared by a vast majority of our Ohio Congressman and Senators. The time has come to allow PRC's to be recognized as health and welfare partners for the vast amount of free and loving services they provide in our state.

Thanks so much for your time.

Sincerely,

Vivian Koob, Med, MRC

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