



## House Finance Committee

### Written Testimony of the Ohio Association of Community Health Centers • Substitute Senate Bill 332 Submitted November 30, 2016

Chairman Smith, Vice Chair Ryan, Ranking Member Driehaus, and Members of the House Finance Committee:

Thank you for the opportunity for the Ohio Association of Community Health Centers (OACHC) to submit proponent testimony on Substitute Senate Bill 332, legislation capturing the hard-work and recommendations of the Ohio Commission of Infant Mortality.

Infant mortality is at a crisis level in Ohio relative to the rest of the nation as persistent disparities in birth outcomes and infant health within the first year of life continue to exist, particularly between the population as a whole and certain subpopulations. **As such, the OACHC Board of Directors named Infant Mortality as one of its main priorities and top clinical areas of focus for 2015-2017. We commend solutions to attack our abysmal infant mortality rates identified in SB 332 and offer full support of this comprehensive legislation.**

The Ohio Association of Community Health Centers (OACHC) represents all of Ohio's 46 Federally Qualified Health Centers and FQHC Look-Alikes (more commonly referred to as Community Health Centers), providing care to over 623,000 Ohioans in over 260 care sites. Community Health Centers are non-profit health care providers that deliver affordable, high quality and comprehensive primary care to medically underserved populations, regardless of insurance status. For more than 50 years, Community Health Centers provide integrated whole person care, often times providing onsite dental, behavioral, pharmacy, vision and other needed supplemental services under one roof. No two Community Health Centers are exactly alike but they all share one common purpose: to provide primary health care services that are coordinated, culturally and linguistically competent, and community-directed.

Community Health Centers play a critical role in the health care system and are the health care home to **more than 623,000 Ohioans including 13,000 pregnant women, 15,000 infants, and 163,000 women of child-bearing age**. Health Center patients are among the nation's most vulnerable populations – people who are isolated from traditional forms of medical care because of where they live, who they are, the language they speak, and their higher levels of complex health care needs. And yet, Health Centers produce positive results for their patients and for the communities they serve while their costs of care ranking among the lowest, saving billions of dollars for taxpayers.

OACHC and member Health Centers from varying parts of the state are involved in a number of strategies to challenge the system and decrease Ohio's rates of infant deaths, including the Ohio Perinatal Quality Collaborative Progesterone Project, FQHC Centering Pregnancy Demonstration Initiative, Perinatal Tobacco Cessation Project, Ohio Chapter AAP's Injury Prevention and Safe Sleep Learning Collaborative, and FQHC Birth Spacing Initiative. All are evidenced-based interventions focused on process and system improvements, identified as a solution to a local need. OACHC will collect the

learning from all of these infant vitality initiatives and share the best practices statewide throughout the entire Community Health Center network.

With a proven record of delivering high-quality, low-cost health care, coupled with a strong presence in vulnerable/highest need communities – including impoverished urban neighborhoods, small towns and rural counties where poverty and unemployment are historically high – **Community Health Centers are uniquely poised and ready to use data-driven infant vitality models to reduce Ohio’s infant mortality rates. SB 332 provides the pathways to do just that.**

On behalf of our 46 member Health Centers and 623,000 patients served, the Ohio Association of Community Health Centers appreciates the opportunity to submit written testimony in full support of SB 332. Please contact Julie DiRossi-King at [jdirossi@ohiohc.org](mailto:jdirossi@ohiohc.org); 614.884.3101 with questions or further information.