

House Finance Subcommittee on Health and Human Services
November 15, 2016
Statement by Allyson Blandford
Director Advocacy & Government Affairs
March of Dimes

Thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony on SB332. The March of Dimes supports passage of the bill.

The March of Dimes is a national voluntary health agency whose volunteers and staff work to improve the health of infants and children by preventing birth defects, premature births and infant mortality. Founded in 1938, the March of Dimes funds programs of research, community services, education and advocacy.

Prematurity is a common, serious and costly public health problem. Together with associated conditions, prematurity is the leading cause of neonatal death and infant mortality in the U.S. In the state of Ohio, 10.3% of births were preterm in 2016, falling short of the March of Dimes 2020 goal of 8.1% and resulting in a "C" grade on the March of Dimes Preterm Birth Report Card.

SB332 addresses the issues of infant mortality and preterm rates through the following evidence based provisions:

- Studies have shown the risk of preterm birth diminishes in at-risk women from weekly administration of progesterone supplementation (17P) beginning between 16-24 weeks gestation through 37 weeks gestation. The March of Dimes supports extending access to 17P through granting pharmacists the ability to administer the medication.
- Cigarette smoking during pregnancy poses many risks for women and their babies, including increased risk of premature delivery and low birthweight. The harmful effects are directly linked to the amount and duration of smoking during pregnancy. The March of Dimes supports legislative and regulatory action to reduce exposure to tobacco smoke by women of child bearing age (especially those who are pregnant) and infants, and to increase the availability and access to effective smoking prevention and cessation services.
- Birth spacing refers to the time from one child's birth until the next pregnancy. Spacing pregnancies too close together is a known risk factor for preterm birth and infant mortality. Access to services that promote appropriate birth spacing can improve outcomes. The March of Dimes promotes birth spacing interventions supported by scientific evidence to improve maternal and child health outcomes.

As always, the March of Dimes remains a resource and a partner in this conversation. To that end, please contact us if you need any specific data and/or have questions or concerns.

Thank you for your consideration of our support.