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**Proponent Testimony on Senate Bill 332**  
**House Finance Subcommittee on Health & Human Services**  
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Chairman Sprague, Ranking Member Sykes, members of the subcommittee, thank you for allowing me the opportunity to provide written testimony today supporting SB 332.

My name is Claudia Herrold and I am senior vice president for communications and public policy at Philanthropy Ohio, a statewide membership association that provides the network, tools and knowledge to help people engaged in philanthropy become more effective, powerful change agents in their communities. Philanthropy Ohio has over 200 member organizations, whose assets total about \$50 billion and who contribute more than \$4 billion annually to thousands of nonprofits. In the health area, Ohio foundations invest more than \$250 million a year for many purposes, including reducing infant mortality.

The number of Ohio babies who die before their first birthday is simply unacceptable and that is why Philanthropy Ohio supports SB 332 and hopes that you will move the bill through committee and to a positive House vote before the end of this General Assembly session. Consider just a few facts:

- Ohio ranks 45<sup>th</sup> in the nation in overall infant mortality rates;
- 7 of every 1000 babies born in Ohio died before their first birthday in 2014; and
- The rate of black babies who died is twice that – 14.3 – and actually increased from previous years.

Philanthropy has worked with government and community partners to develop and implement various initiatives to address the problem in their local regions. Here are just a few examples of those projects:

In Cleveland, The George Gund Foundation and other funders are supporting the creation and launch of First Year Cleveland, the public-private partnership (city, county, philanthropy, providers, academia, etc.) to coordinate and expand comprehensive infant mortality reduction strategies.

The Community Foundation of Lorain County just last month made a \$150,000 grant to increase the number of Community Health Workers making home visits to expecting and new mothers and to purchase “Pack N Play” sets for those without safe sleeping furniture. The grant will nearly double the number of women served by the General Health District and addressing infant mortality.

Foundations including Interact for Health and Fifth Third as well as the United Way of Greater Cincinnati are supporting efforts such as Cradle Cincinnati, which focuses on improving sleep practices, reducing tobacco use and birth spacing, and Pregnancy Pathways.

Here in the Columbus area, the United Way of Central Ohio supports Celebrate One, an infant mortality reduction coalition. It has received funds from the Ohio Commission on Minority Health and the Ohio

Healthy Buckeye Program to reduce infant mortality among low-income, minority women and in specific at-risk neighborhoods.

In Northwest Ohio, as you've heard in previous testimony, has seen significant reductions in infant mortality in its program that is supported by the Toledo Community Foundation and other funders.

These are just a few examples of how Ohio philanthropy is working on this critical issue. Philanthropy invests in evidence-based programs; given always-limited resources, it is critical to support and expand what has been proven to work in preventing low birth weight, poor birth outcomes and infant mortality.

But these efforts, along with the state's policy efforts to combat the high infant mortality rate, are not enough. SB 332 is a comprehensive, coordinated approach – critical if not sufficient – to reduce the number of Ohio infants who die each year. The bill is innovative and deliberate in its focus on the social determinants of health, a focus that is critical to preventing the death of our youngest residents. By addressing housing issues and increasing the number of qualified community hubs providing services to at-risk populations the bill can go a long way toward saving babies. Its other provisions are also important, from tobacco cessation efforts to birth spacing and safe sleep education, to keeping babies alive. These are interventions that work – we have proof of that – and strengthening these provisions will help our state move the needle on infant mortality. Please signal your commitment to saving the lives of Ohio's most vulnerable residents by passing SB 332.