



November 16, 2016

Chair Sprague and Members of the Finance Committee on Health and Human Services,

Thank you for your consideration of statewide efforts to assure that babies born in Ohio live to celebrate their first birthdays and thrive each year beyond that. Senate Bill 332 contains critical strategies to reduce infant mortality in our state. On behalf of the partners who make up CelebrateOne, Columbus' collective impact infant mortality initiative, we urge you to move to pass this bill.

CelebrateOne is focused on the key drivers of infant mortality: babies born too small or too soon, congenital abnormalities, maternal and household smoking, unsafe sleep practices and social and economic conditions that drive disparities. SB 332 addresses several of these and upon implementation would significantly advance our local efforts.

All of the evidenced based strategies being implemented through CelebrateOne are born out of the Greater Columbus Infant Mortality Task Force. Our goal is to reduce infant mortality locally by forty percent and cut racial disparity in half. Monthly, quarterly and annual monitoring of infant deaths and related metrics greatly informs our efforts. SB 332 promotes the timely availability of data to track progress and as such will be of tremendous assistance to our partners.

A critical strategy for CelebrateOne is addressing the social determinants of health within eight neighborhoods in Columbus that have infant mortality rates that are two and three times higher than the county-wide rate. We consider this our heaviest lift as it requires significant resources over time in order to demonstrate improvement. Among the greatest needs in these neighborhoods is the availability of housing assistance for pregnant women who are either homeless or housing insecure. Rental assistance and the availability of safe, affordable housing are fundamental supports that can lead to improvements in birth outcomes. Addressing other needs such as transportation and the availability of fresh, nutritious food are also important components of a comprehensive approach to neighborhood improvements that can reduce our infant mortality rate.

Sleep related deaths are among the most preventable and we are encouraged by the proposed strategies to promote safe sleep education, the availability of pack 'n play cribs and prohibitions on the sale of crib bumpers. These strategies will serve as a strong complement to our local efforts which since the inception of CelebrateOne in 2015 has led to distribution of nearly 2,000 cribs, training over 400 safe sleep ambassadors, and launching a safe sleep media campaign. Combining state and

local efforts will go a long way in creating a culture of safe sleep practices for babies in Ohio.

The five-year plan CelebrateOne has in place is designed to embed strategies within existing organizations that will improve conditions now and into the future. The statewide policies, resources, and initiatives proposed through SB 332 will have a significant impact and will result in many more babies celebrating their first birthdays.

We applaud the leadership of Senator Jones and Tavares as well as Representative Kunze for their commitment to improving the lives of babies in our state and for moving this bill forward. CelebrateOne is in full support and remains committed to assisting in whatever ways we can.

Respectfully submitted,

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Executive Director
CelebrateOne