



Testimony in Support of the Certified Pathways Community HUB Model to Reduce Infant Mortality

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Chairman Burke, Vice Chair Manning, Ranking Minority Member Cafaro, and Members of the Committee; thank you for allowing me to testify today in support of Senate Bill 9 that furthers the Certified Pathways Community Hub Model and the Community Health Worker Workforce to reduce infant mortality in Ohio. I'm Jan Ruma, Vice President of the Hospital Council of Northwest Ohio, where I'm responsible for community health improvement, including serving as the Director of the Northwest Ohio Pathways HUB.

First, a thank you to Senator Jones for incorporating into Senate Bill 9 the recommendations made to this committee in May to reduce infant mortality in Ohio. These recommendations include funding a grant program through the Ohio Commission on Minority Health to further existing Pathways Community HUBs and replicating three new HUBs strategically in hot spot regions across the state, which will further the development and sustainability of the Community Health Worker profession.

The certified Pathways HUB model provides infrastructure in communities to link together care coordination agencies and eliminate duplication of services. The Certified Pathways Community HUB mobilizes the community to work hand-in-hand with Medicaid coverage to reduce infant mortality and reduce cost. Medicaid provides healthcare coverage to low-income pregnant women and the Pathways HUBs provide community health workers to translate that Medicaid card into access at the local level by helping the woman enrolled address basic needs, such as food, clothing, shelter, and transportation, so that her health and healthcare, and the health of her baby, can be a priority. Any program can work through a HUB as long as it geared toward connecting at-risk pregnant women to evidenced based prenatal care, needed social services, and meeting basic needs.

In Northwest Ohio, through the certified Pathways HUB Model, the Hospital Council of Northwest Ohio contracts with 8 health, social service, and community organizations that enroll women with the greatest risk, demonstrated by the fact that each pregnant woman enrolled has on average, not one, but 7 risk factors for poor birth outcomes, such as previous poor birth outcomes, being African American, unmarried, living in poverty, mental illness, and being homeless. Of the women enrolled, 74% represent a minority population. Despite the high burden of risk of Pathways clients, the low birth weight rate for African American women enrolled is 9.5%, compared to a rate greater than 13% for the county and the state, and 80% of our moms completed their post-partum visit as recommended. If Ohio's African American Low Birth Weight was equal to the Northwest Ohio Pathways HUB's, it would save \$32 million annually in Medicaid costs alone. Due to the

excellent return on investment, the Initiative has moved from being solely grant funded to being funded primarily by pay-for-performance Medicaid managed care contracts. These payments help to sustain the Community Health Worker workforce.

The certified Pathways HUB Model utilizes financial accountability to ensure that the targeted vulnerable population is enrolled and connected to evidence-based service. The Initiative's contracts for care coordination services are paid based on the following measurable objectives: 1) enrolling pregnant women with multiple risk factors for poor birth outcomes; 2) receipt of each prenatal care visit and face-to-face educational visit; 3) successful connection to needed social services, such as a safe crib for the baby; 3) the delivery of a viable normal birth weight infant weighing at least 2500 grams (5 pounds, 8 ounces or greater); 4) receipt of post-partum visit, and 5) baby connected to a medical home.

The ideal care coordinator working through a certified Pathways HUB is a Community Health Worker, known as a CHW. CHWs are frontline public health workers who are trusted members of the community or have an unusually close understanding of the community they serve. The CHWs working through our certified HUB connects clients to both medical and social services while promoting their client's personal responsibility for their health and welfare.

One of the challenges for CHWs across the country is sustainable sources of funding for their work. Our medical system is geared to fund clinical care, despite the fact that the social issues can have a dramatic effect on health. Certified Pathways HUBs provide an outcome oriented mechanism to address the social determinants of health and sustain employment for Community Health Workers through contracts with Medicaid Managed Care, within the scope of the CHW role as a key member of a community care team, working through a HUB to achieve outcomes that ultimately improve health status.

Senate Bill 9 will serve as a catalyst to expand the capacity of the existing Pathways Community HUBs in Toledo, Cincinnati, and Mansfield to serve more women at risk and meet the requirements of contracting with Medicaid Managed Care Plans; and will provide funding and technical assistance to start-up three new certified Pathways Community HUBs in hotspot regions in Ohio with the highest rates of infant mortality. This funding will provide HUBs with the systems and infrastructure needed to be a strategic community based partners with Medicaid Managed Care. Through the HUBs contracts will fund Community Health Workers to translate Medicaid Healthcare Coverage into improved health status and help our babies get to one and beyond. Senate Bill 9, with its 4.1 million dollar appropriation for the Ohio Commission on Minority Health, will only have to prevent 107 low birth weight babies across the state to more than pay for itself.

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