



Testimony in Support of Senate Bill 9

Sandy Oxley, Voices for Ohio's Children

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Chairman Burke, Vice Chair Manning, Ranking Member Cafaro, and members of the Senate Medicaid Committee, thank you for this opportunity to testify before you today in support of Senate Bill 9. My name is Sandy Oxley, and I am the CEO of Voices for Ohio's Children.

Voices for Ohio's Children advocates for policies that maximize a child's life chances by ensuring children are safe, healthy, educated, connected, and employable. Voices helps ensure that the needs of Ohio's 3 million children are prioritized at the local, state and federal levels. In order to accomplish this goal, our organization advocates for sound public policies that help ensure children are poised for success.

Voices has been a strong and long standing supporter of legislative efforts to address Ohio's infant mortality crisis. We support SB 9 and applaud the efforts of Senator Jones and Senator Lehner to make further progress on this issue. As you know, Ohio still ranks 46th nationally in overall infant mortality, and 50th among African American infants. Our state must continue to find creative and common sense ways to guarantee that more children in Ohio survive and thrive beyond their first birthday.

This bill will provide evidence-based services that reduce negative birth outcomes for pregnant women, new mothers, and women who may become pregnant that are Medicaid enrollees. It will establish high quality data collection for home visiting services aimed at reducing infant mortality and negative birth outcomes. This bill will also facilitate the creation of Community Hubs that will utilize evidence based practices to connect expectant and new moms to services that address many of the leading risk factors associated with infant death – including the social determinants health. The evidence based model employed by these Community Hubs will include the deployment of community health workers who are connected in important ways to the communities in which these women live. Utilizing community health workers will help connect high risk expectant and new moms to services that address traditional medical needs. Community Hubs will also help

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connect expectant and new moms to services that can address certain barriers to following medical advice and/or accessing traditional medical services, such as potential behavioral health conditions, inadequate employment, and insufficient or non-existent housing. The Community HUB and Pathways model is a proven strategy to connect families with education and employment solutions. By working with individuals on education and employment solutions, Community Hubs can help to provide the “pathways” to free a person from the social and environmental conditions that often create barriers to accessing health services or that make it more difficult to succeed in making significant lifestyle changes to improve their health outcomes.

By engaging in better data collection, providing evidence based services such as home visiting and behavioral health care, and working to better coordinate care for expectant and new moms through proven strategies employed by Community Hubs in Ohio, SB 9 will help to move the needle on infant mortality in our state. This crisis is urgent, and this bill contains cost effective proven strategies for ensuring women receive evidence based preventative care to help guarantee that their children will survive and thrive past their first birthday and into a productive adulthood.

Thank for this opportunity to testify on SB 9. I would be happy to answer questions from members of the committee at any time.

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