

Dear Chairman Beagle, Vice-chair Williams, and members of the committee,

Thank you for allowing me to testify today on House Bill 64. I represent Elizabeth's New Life Center, which operates six Women's Centers [Pregnancy Resource Centers] in southwest Ohio. Elizabeth's New Life Center (ENLC) was awarded and is currently receiving funding from the Ohio Parenting and Pregnancy Program (OPP). We have been able to provide incredible services to at-risk pregnant women with the help of OPP funding and want to ask that you maintain current funding in the biennium—that is, \$1 million, the same amount that was approved by the House.

Since receiving OPP funding in mid-December through February 28, we have served 618 TANF-eligible clients who are pregnant or have a child under 12 months old. Of these, 90.6% were pregnant. We provided pregnancy tests to all, prenatal vitamins to 312 and ultrasound scans to 519, all free of charge. Because so many low-income women come to us to find out if they are pregnant, we are in a unique position to encourage early prenatal care, which in turn reduces infant mortality.

With new OPP funding, we have initiated group class series at all of our six Women's Centers. Class series include: Bonding with Your Unborn Baby, Childbirth Education, Breastfeeding, Safe Sleep, Car Seat Safety and Parenting the Newborn. These group classes are in addition to and complement the one-on-one mentoring currently provided at our women's centers, called our Earn While You Learn Program. Incentives (*Baby Bucks*) offered at both group classes and individual mentoring sessions assist low income women and their partners gather much-needed supplies to create a safe environment for their newborns. Services continue after birth as well, so that families can successfully address parenting challenges and continue to “earn” material supplies at no cost to them. Already, we have provided over 50 group sessions to an average of 4 clients each. Clients have been able to earn sleep sacks, nursing pillows, car seats, pack-n-plays and even cribs.

Earlier this month our first Job Readiness Training participant began the two-week training program that provides employment seekers job readiness training in conjunction with our baby boutique. Trainees work under the supervision of our Boutique Manager as they sort and manage stock and earn *Baby Bucks* as an additional incentive for participation. Trainees can then spend them for the items they are helping to sort and stock in the boutique. Once a trainee satisfactorily completes the program, ENLC will provide them with a certificate and letter of recommendation. We estimate that we will serve a total of 10 clients with job readiness services through then OPP grant period.

Believing early and accessible prenatal care is the key to reducing infant mortality, ENLC offers excellent and comprehensive prenatal care on site at our Dayton location to Medicaid-eligible women. We offer wrap-around support services from our social worker who provides counseling, social services and referrals; and our perinatal nurse educator provides individualized health instruction and group education classes. Our goal is for patients to start care during the first trimester and continue care for 10 or more visits during the pregnancy in order to improve birth outcomes. We take great pride that our Prenatal Care Office has demonstrated consistently better (lower) rates of preterm deliveries and low birth weight babies as compared to the

Montgomery County and statewide rates. Expenses not reimbursed by Medicaid are underwritten by Elizabeth's New Life Center.

I thank you for the opportunity to share the good work of Elizabeth's New Life Center in reducing infant mortality and helping low-income pregnant and parenting families succeed. I ask for the appropriation to continue funding for the Ohio Parenting and Pregnancy Program.

At this time I would be happy to answer any questions that the Chairman or committee may have.