June 11, 2019

Representative Matt Dolan, Chair
Finance Committee
Ohio House

Dear Representative Dolan and members of the Finance Committee,

Thank you, committee members, for opportunity to share my perspective regarding HB 166. My name is Marjorie McLellan, and I retired last month as a professor in the School of Public and International Affairs at Wright State University where I have also served as Assistant and Interim Director of the Nonprofit Leadership certificate program and as Director of the Center for Service-Learning and Civic Engagement. In these positions and as an instructor in service-learning courses, I have worked extensively with neighborhoods, schools, and nonprofits in the Miami Valley. I am also the grandparent to foster and adopted children here in Ohio so I have both professional and personal experience with the challenges facing families and communities. As a Community Advisory Board Member for Help Me Grow Dayton and the Nurse-Family Partnership, I have the privilege to learn first-hand about the success of their evidence-based programs in meeting the needs of first time mothers.

First-time motherhood is critical and intensive, extended, caring relationships are crucial to help at risk mothers have healthy births, care for their infants and toddlers, build positive family relationships, and—during this first pregnancy—develop the capacity to build a healthy family for this first child and for their future children.

However, first-time mothers have overwhelming needs and needs that require a sustained, informed, supportive approach. In the absence of support, mothers and children are at risk of overwhelming medical, mental health, social, and economic challenges. They may be at risk for challenges related to childbirth and poor health outcomes for newborn babies. My daughter-in-law gave birth prematurely to her three babies due to a health problem; however she had the support of excellent health care and a strong extended family system. However, as a result, I saw first hand the heart-breaking struggles of newborns and their parents in the NICU at Ohio State University. These outcomes and challenges clearly overwhelm many first-time mothers with or without the same resources. The challenges that many first time mothers and their children face are profound, diverse, and overwhelming—these mothers need a strong, trust-based, and ongoing relationship with a healthcare professional who can address their many needs while referring them for additional resources.

I am inspired by the wisdom and compassion of the services provided by The Nurse-Family Partnership. The Nurse-Family Partnership has three goals:
1. Improve pregnancy outcomes
2. Improve child health and development
3. Improve economic self-sufficiency of the family.
In partnership with the Ohio Department of Health and with the support of philanthropic partners, Medicaid and others, the Nurse-Family Partnership network, across 5 sites, has served almost 5,000 Ohio children since 1996. The NFP's visiting nurses work intensively with expectant and new mothers over years providing the support that these expectant and new, first time mothers need. This program is an exceptional, evidence-based model of success that goes deeper to address the root issues and challenges and has lasting benefits for mothers, children, families, and our communities. The effectiveness of the in-depth, sustained, professional nursing approach at the heart of The Nurse-Family Partnership should inform policy decisions in Ohio.

We all want a future where all children are healthy, families thrive, communities prosper, and the cycle of poverty is broken. With your continued support and increased funding, The Nurse-Family Partnership can help even more families using an evidence-based model to achieve these positive outcomes for children, families, and communities.

Thank you for the opportunity to share the story of The NFP as you consider HB 166.

Sincerely yours,

Marjorie McLellan
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