Senate Health, Human Services & Medicaid Committee

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Chairman Burke, Ranking Member Antonio, and Members of the Senate Health, Human Services & Medicaid Committee,

Good morning, my name is Horace Highland and I’m from Centering Healthcare Institute. I am here today to testify in support of House Bill 11.

We are grateful to Representatives Manning and Howse for sponsoring the bill, and to the House for recognizing the essential nature of the work to combat infant and maternal mortality in the state and unanimously passing House Bill 11. We support all four elements of HB 11-smoking cessation, dental hygiene, lead education, and group prenatal care.

Today, I would like to discuss why group prenatal care programs such as CenteringPregnancy are so important to my community.

As you have already heard, CenteringPregnancy is an evidence-based model of group prenatal care that has been shown to significantly reduce preterm birth, a leading cause of infant mortality in Ohio.

The CenteringPregnancy Group prenatal care is the billable prenatal care visit, allowing 8-12 pregnant women with similar due dates to extend their time with their healthcare providers to 90-120 minutes per session. In Centering, healthcare providers are trained to be more facilitative in their interactions with patients and allow for the elevation of the women’s lived experience alongside of clinical guidance.  Our model that takes place in a group setting, allowing patients to spend more time with their healthcare providers. In group prenatal care, 8-12 pregnant women due within the same month attend their prenatal care sessions together. At the beginning of each session, women take part in their own care by measuring and recording their own blood pressure, temperature and weight. Then each woman meets with her healthcare provider for her individual health assessment.

CenteringPregnancy is the oldest and most researched group prenatal care model, with numerous published studies showing our group prenatal care model has shown to significantly improve maternal and child health outcomes, particularly for African American women being served across the state of Ohio.

Centering Healthcare Institute (CHI) is the national accrediting organization for healthcare practices that use the CenteringPregnancy care model.  We advise and train healthcare practices on how to make the necessary system changes and healthcare delivery methods to provide CenteringPregnancy care. Our accreditation process ensures that Centering practices conform and align with the evidence-based model. We believe having independent 3rd party accreditation is an important value add for the state’s multi-million-dollar investment proposed in HB11.

CHI has extensive experience collaborating with state health departments to structure programs to expand patient access to CenteringPregnancy. In South Carolina we worked with that state’s Birth Outcomes Initiative to grow from 2 locations to 27 locations between 2012 and 2017 and implement enhanced reimbursement for Centering within the states’ Medicaid program. In partnership with New York City Dept of Health and Mental Hygiene we are currently rolling out new CenteringPregnancy programs in boroughs with high rates of infant mortality.  We are also working with both the New York State Dept of Health and New Jersey Dept of Health on initiatives to reduce black maternal and infant mortality through expanding access to CenteringPregnancy care. Additionally, we are supporting CenteringPregnancy sites in Georgia who are taking part in a state Medicaid pilot testing the impact of enhanced reimbursement for group prenatal care.

CHI is fully committed to the success of CenteringPregnancy in Ohio and continues to invest heavily here. In 2008 we started supporting the first CenteringPregnancy practice here in Ohio Over the past 10 years since we have grown our network to include 51 practices which ranks Ohio among the top states in the country alongside California and New York. As CHI’s Regional Director here in Ohio, I work closely with the First Year Cleveland, Cradle Cincinnati and 30 plus other important stakeholders working to improve maternal and infant birth outcomes.

University Hospitals is named as a Centering Regional Leadership Partner, one of only two facilities in the country that have received this designation.

We urge the committee to consider CHI as an expert partner in ensuring that Ohio Centering sites plans for programs and ongoing budget allocation are sustainable and meet national quality standards. Based on our experience in Ohio and across the nation, we strongly recommend that grants sites be able to demonstrate the capacity for sustainability of Centering, assure sites capacity for data collection and submission as specified under the grants, provide cross-organizational support for the implementation and sustainability of evidence-based group prenatal care and assure that grant sites selected are required and committed to obtain and maintain accreditation/certification/other quality standards offered by the appropriate oversight body of the group prenatal care model.

Again, thank you for working on this important topic, and I would be happy to answer any questions. CHI looks forward to working with the committee, the sponsors, and the implementing agencies to ensure that this significant investment in the health of mothers and babies in Ohio is successful and sustainable. Thank you for working on this important topic. I urge passage of this bill, and I would be happy to answer any questions.