



TESTIMONY OF:

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IN SUPPORT OF:

Senate Bill 326
Modify Pregnancy Mortality Review Board
Health, Human Services and Medicaid Committee
September 22, 2020

Chair Dave Burke, Vice Chair Stephen Huffman, Ranking Minority Member Nickie Antonio, and distinguished members of the Ohio Senate Health, Human Services and Medicaid Committee, thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony today in support of Senate Bill 326, the modification of the Ohio Pregnancy Associated Mortality Review (PAMR) Board.

My name is Erin Ryan and I serve as the Managing Director of the Ohio Women's Public Policy Network, a coalition of nearly 40 organizations working collaboratively to advocate for public policy solutions that build economic opportunity for women and families. We are united by a collective vision: an Ohio in which all women, particularly women of color and low-income women, have the resources to thrive and the ability to live economically secure, safe, and healthy lives.

One crucial component of our shared policy agenda is to improve maternal health outcomes and address maternal health inequity, particularly for Black mothers who face higher rates of maternal mortality and morbidity. This shaped our interest in testifying today in support of Ohio's Senate Bill 326, legislation that would make modifications to the state's Pregnancy Associated Mortality Review (PAMR) Board to better identify factors contributing to pregnancy-associated deaths and make recommendations regarding their mitigation and prevention.

The PAMR is an important tool for our state to identify, track, and review maternal deaths, and the data produced is crucial for painting a comprehensive picture of what is contributing to pregnancy-associated deaths - and how we should tackle the causes of those deaths. By strengthening the components of PARM, such as improving reporting requirements and diversifying representation of the board make-up, **Senate Bill 326 would help our state more**

effectively understand how to move forward solutions that improve maternal health outcomes and address the maternal mortality crisis.

In 2019, the Ohio Department of Health released the state's first comprehensive report on pregnancy-associated death, based on data collected by PARM. The report found that 57 percent of the pregnancy-associated deaths in Ohio between the years 2012-2016 were deemed preventable, with Black women experiencing disproportionately higher death rates.¹ This report demonstrates the importance of PARM, and why the improvements that Senate Bill 326 would make to it are needed. By understanding the status of maternal health across different populations in Ohio, we can better develop solutions that will effectively address the root causes. The data has also shown us that we must center the voices, experiences, and needs of Black women in solutions in order to fully address the racial disparities in maternal health outcomes.

The modifications that this bill proposes will strengthen PAMR by effectively targeting the discussed maternal health outcomes and disparities. By requiring the development of an annual report, PAMR will be better positioned to address and reduce the multifaceted factors contributing to pregnancy associated deaths, such as systemic racism, discrimination and bias within the health care systems or racial disparities in access and quality of care. Providing updated information on an annual basis, will allow frequent assessments of systemic disparities that collectively affect the availability, delivery, and quality of care. Furthermore, this bill proposes an additional analysis by PAMR of data and trends associated with severe maternal morbidity among Ohio women, which will provide further insight into making determinations regarding the preventability of adverse maternal health outcomes.

The Ohio Pregnancy-Associated Mortality Review Board plays an essential role in the development of maternal health-related interventions. It can help us to better understand the extent of the problem and how to move forward solutions, such as cultural competency training for health care professionals and a state paid family leave program, that effectively center those most impacted.

During the most recent state budget process, the Ohio Legislature passed a final version of the budget that codified PAMR and set new biennial reporting requirements. Committing to research and review is a positive first step, and on behalf of the Ohio Women's Public Policy Network, **I urge the legislature to continue to address the maternal mortality crisis, particularly in addressing the racial disparities in maternal health, by enacting Senate Bill 326.**

Thank you again for the opportunity to testify. I am available to answer any questions today or by email at ryan@innovationohio.org.

¹ <https://www.daytondailynews.com/news/local/half-ohio-pregnancy-related-deaths-preventable-report-shows/H6ImOmNoil8uf4vPrfPWBP/>

Sincerely,

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