

Rhiannon Carnes Testimony:

Hello, Chairwoman Manchester, Vice-Chair Cutrola, Ranking Member Liston, and Members of the Families, Aging, and Human Services Committee, Thank you for allowing me to submit written testimony to the committee. My name is Rhiannon Carnes, and I am a mother, wife, organizer, and healthcare professional for over 20 years. I am also the Co-Executive Director of The Ohio Women's Alliance and strongly support House Bill 142, which I believe is one of the best pathways to ensure safe birthing for all people in Ohio.

Ohio Women's Alliance is a reproductive justice values-aligned organization that builds capacity towards progressive change and equity through a base-building alliance of women and femmes rooted in self-determination on all levels of life, including birthing. Ohio Women's Alliance supports HB 142, a safe birthing bill, and all efforts to increase positive birthing outcomes for Black, Indigenous, and people of color.

Doulas are essential historical and cultural practitioners who have been around for thousands of years and are integral to African and Indigenous communities for safe birthing outcomes. Doula practitioners extend beyond the surgical and medical profession and have indigenous roots critical for a way of life that supports mental, emotional, spiritual, psychological, and physiological experiences that historically have been excluded from the obstetrics process. Becoming a parent or adding an addition to your family will impact all portions of your life and thus require all aspects of support. The medical profession often attributes the nonmedical portion of positive birthing outcomes as non-impactful. Still, we know that nonmedical support within these cultures closes the gap that many birthing parents experience while interacting with the healthcare system, such as advocating for themselves and their needs, believed when in pain, discomfort, or other conditions. Due to the amount of time spent with the parents and family, doulas have a unique perspective working with parents of color. Additionally, they can think critically to provide support, recommendations, and referrals for acute medical symptoms that may be hard to catch.

HB 142 acknowledges doulas as part of a birthing team that ensures mental, emotional, informative support and advocacy for pregnant people. This bill recognizes doula's historical and cultural impact on Indigenous and African communities with positive birth outcomes for parent and child. These methods have validity that must be recognized and supported as part of a broader medical and birthing plan. HB 142 also certifies that doulas are critical for positive outcomes that support continuity of care by providing wrap-around services beyond pregnancy and giving birth, increasing the quality of care over time from pregnancy to the first year of life, and beyond.

With all of the positive outcomes that HB 142 will have on parents, children, and family, we respectfully ask that you vote yes, on HB 142 to improve and protect safe and healthy birthing outcomes for all people in Ohio. I want to thank the committee Chairman, Vice-Chair, Ranking

Members, and all the members for the opportunity to submit written testimony for the Families, Aging, and Human Service Committee and the chance to testify in support of House Bill 142.