

Chairwoman Manchester, Vice-Chair Cutrona, Ranking Member Liston, and members of the Ohio House Families, Aging, and Human Services Committee, thank you for allowing me the opportunity to present testimony in support of House Bill 142. My name is Lauren Blauvelt-Copelin, and I am the Vice President of Government Affairs and Public Advocacy for Planned Parenthood Advocates of Ohio.

No matter our skin color, where we live, or where we're from, we all want to get accessible care that keeps our families and us safe. But here in Ohio, *over half* of all pregnancy-related deaths between 2012 and 2016 were preventable. This is unacceptable—and right now, you have a chance to do something about it.

Researchers and policymakers agree that a solution to combat this health crisis would be to ensure that every pregnant person has access to a doula, **no matter their income**. Representative Erica Crawley's House Bill 142 would address this by allowing Medicaid to provide reimbursement for doula services.

Doulas provide needed health education, advocacy, and physical and emotional support for pregnant people before, during, and after childbirth. Multiple studies have found that people who have doula support have had better birth [outcomes](#) and improved paternal health outcomes.

This health crisis kills Ohioans at a disproportionate rate. In Ohio, due to racism in health care, Black infants are three times more likely to die than white [infants](#), and Black people are two and a half times more likely to die because of pregnancy-related issues than white people. Racism is an urgent health crisis here in Ohio and across the country.

Groups like [Restoring Our Own Through Transformation \(ROOTT\)](#), [Birthing Beautiful Communities](#), and [Cradle Cincinnati](#) provide this care within the Black community, supporting Black families through pregnancy and childbirth. These programs center the needs of Black individuals and families and work to mitigate the racial disparities that plague our healthcare system. Programs like these need to be uplifted and supported and **HB 142** will do just that.

Right now, we have an opportunity to expand reproductive health access by addressing Ohio's high maternal and infant mortality rates, especially among Black Ohioans.

Communities are strong when everyone has reproductive freedom and can access the care they need to plan families without barriers, fears, or interference from others. Increased access to compassionate doulas who center and advocate for the needs of pregnant and postpartum people will mean healthier and safer families and communities across Ohio.

I urge you to vote yes on House Bill 142, a bill that will save lives. Thank you for hearing my testimony.

Sincerely,

Lauren Blauvelt-Copelin

Vice President of Government Affairs and Public Advocacy

Planned Parenthood Advocates of Ohio