

Proponent Testimony

Introduction:

Chair Manchester, Vice-Chair Cutrona, Ranking Member Liston, and members of the House Families, Aging, and Human Services Committee, thank you for the opportunity to provide proponent testimony on House Bill 142, which will allow Medicaid to reimburse for doula services.

My name is Maureen Stapleton, and I work with CelebrateOne as the Executive Director.

Testimony:

- The Coalition that is CelebrateOne is the collective community impact initiative created to address Columbus and Franklin County's unacceptably high infant mortality rate.
- CelebrateOne, comprised of Columbus Public Health, Ohio Better Birth Outcomes, the Central Ohio Hospital Council, 11 lead agencies that meet monthly and over 100 faith and community-based organizations is focused on providing resources to support mothers and infants to ensure every child born in our community has the opportunity to thrive.
- In the past, Franklin County has one of the highest infant mortality rates in the country and too many babies did not reach their first birthday. In 2020, the IMR in Columbus dropped to 6.7 deaths per 1,000 live births, the lowest overall IMR since tracking began in 2011; But the **IMR for non-Hispanic black babies in Columbus is 11.6 deaths per 1,000 live births, 2.8 times higher than the non-Hispanic white babies result of 4.1.**
- **It is important to note that 18,000 babies are born annually in Franklin County. That is 13.04 % of all babies born in Ohio. Similar to statewide trends, 50% of births in Franklin County or approximately 9,000 babies are born to families who are Medicaid recipients or Medicaid eligible.**
- Many conditions that account for pregnancy-related deaths, such as cardiovascular diseases, hypertension, and depression require long-term care. The support of medical coverage for the support of a doula is a great opportunity for Ohio to make strides in access to care for mothers.
- Women receiving doula care have been found to have improved health outcomes for both themselves and their infants, including higher breastfeeding initiation rates, fewer low-birth weight babies, and lower rates of cesarean sections.
- Doulas can also help reduce the impacts of racism and racial bias in health care on pregnant women of color by providing individually tailored, culturally appropriate, and patient centered care and advocacy.
- Additionally, the peer-to-peer support provides mom prenatal and postpartum resources and referrals, answers to questions about labor and birth, emotional support, fosters positive communication with doctors, midwives and nurses, helps women advocate for themselves.

- Understanding the need for better birth outcomes, CelebrateOne has begun convening Doulas to ask for lower cost and free services for some of the city of Columbus' most vulnerable moms because we know doula services have been an effective resource for the moms and families we serve and will improve birth outcomes in our community.
- Bottom line – Doula support is a proven way to save babies and reduce the gap of infant mortality between non-Hispanic white and non-Hispanic black babies in Franklin County.
- Providing Medicaid reimbursement will have a positive impact on birth outcomes and is cost-effect in reducing preterm birth and cesarean deliveries.
- Supporting HB 142 is a start towards better birth and health outcomes for mothers in the state of Ohio as it the expanding postpartum coverage to 12 months that was recently approved through this legislature.

CONCLUSION:

Thank you again for the opportunity to speak on behalf of this legislation. At this time I would be happy to answer any questions you may have.

Respectfully Submitted,

Maureen L. Stapleton
Executive Director
CelebrateOne