



Kathy Scanlon

House Bill No. 110

House Finance Committee

June 3, 2021

Good morning Chairman Dolan, Vice Chair Gavarone, Ranking Member Sykes and members of the committee. Thank you for allowing me to testify before you regarding House Bill 110. As the President of Pregnancy Decision Health Centers (PDHC) in Columbus, Ohio, I represent the work that we do in our five centers located in both Franklin and Fairfield counties, and I am here as an advocate for the work of pregnancy centers from around the state.

PDHC has promoted healthy pregnancy and childbirth since 1981. We provide early pregnancy support services, education, and resources for those who are most at-risk for adverse medical and social outcomes. We provide personalized consultations, pregnancy testing and verification, ultrasounds, prenatal vitamins, education and connection to various pregnancy and family care services. In the past 10 years, over 14,000 women had positive pregnancy tests at our centers. PDHC provides individualized care to address each woman's risks and comprehensive, group parenting classes specifically designed to reduce the risks of infant mortality and promote and empower healthy family outcomes.

As no-cost service providers, pregnancy centers are in a strategic position to reach women in poverty who are at the greatest risk for infant mortality. Each one of our staff nurses has the likelihood to be the first medical point of contact that a woman has during her pregnancy. In 2020, 82% of families served at PDHC reported an annual income at or below the national poverty level, 59% of them with an annual income of less than \$15,000 and an additional 23% with a reported income of less than \$30,000. As a recipient of OPP funds in 2020 and 2021, PDHC increased service to those in need by 57% and served more than 1,900 TANF eligible pregnant women in Franklin County, the county with one of the highest number of infant deaths in our state.

According to the 2019 Ohio Infant Mortality Report, prematurity is the leading cause of infant death. Evidence shows that poorly nourished moms have a higher risk of stillborn and low-birth weight babies. PDHC combats this risk by empowering women with access to early prenatal care and prenatal vitamins. Women receive medical grade pregnancy tests. They receive ultrasounds to show viability and health of the pregnancy as well as how far along they are in their pregnancy in order to provide them

individualized care. Vitamin nutrients support healthy moms and babies during and after pregnancy. All PDHC clients are eligible to receive prenatal vitamins at no cost. During our current OPP grant funding cycle, PDHC has provided 253,980 prenatal vitamin doses to expectant mothers. Prenatal vitamins include necessary nutrients to support brain and spine development, fight against infection and boost iron metabolism and hemoglobin production, and reduce the risk of miscarriage and stillbirth.

In addition, PDHC educates pregnant women and new families on a wide range of topics including: safe sleep, car seat safety, the risks of smoking and substance use, benefits of breastfeeding, fetal development, newborn care and shaken baby syndrome, childbirth education, nutrition and healthy foods and lifestyles, healthy relationships, budgeting and stress management, emergency first aid and fatherhood initiatives. All of which are designed to empower healthy families and reduce the infant mortality rate in our county by using a collaborative approach with county agencies and evidenced-based education. Thanks to OPP funding previously allocated in state's budget PDHC increased parenting education to Franklin County families by 62% in 2020 with over 2,700 parenting class visits.

As a service provider committed to providing care at no cost and without qualification, we have the ability to reach those who are most vulnerable among us. Our greatest challenge is limited resources. Our ability to serve depends on the generosity of our donors. We are very grateful that people of goodwill have enabled us to reach nearly 150,000 women and families through the years, but we know that our state's challenge of infant mortality surpasses our resources. We estimate that PDHC could reach 20% more women and families with funds appropriated to us in the 2022-2023 state budget through the Ohio Parenting and Pregnancy Program.

Chairman Dolan, Vice Chair Gavarone, Ranking Member Sykes and members of the committee, thank you for the opportunity to share how pregnancy centers are uniquely suited to support healthy pregnancy and combat the problem of infant mortality. I appreciate your public service and commitment to reduce the incidence of infant mortality in our state. I urge you to support successful pregnancy outcomes by increasing the amount of funding to 10 million for the Ohio Parenting and Pregnancy Program available to pregnancy centers.