



Chairman Huffman, Vice Chair Antani, Ranking Member Antonio, and members of the Senate Health Committee,

Thank you for allowing me to testify today. My name is Anastasia Martinez and I am the Senior Campaign Manager at Ohio Women's Alliance/Ohio Women's Alliance Action Fund.

Ohio Women's Alliance is a reproductive justice nonprofit organization that strives to build an Ohio in which all people have the economic, social, and political power and resources required to make healthy decisions about our bodies, our sexuality, and reproduction for ourselves, our families, and our communities. **The principles of reproductive justice guide all of our work.** The four pillars of reproductive justice if you are not familiar are: the right to have a child, the right to not have a child, the right to raise your children in a safe community, and the right to bodily autonomy.

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.

In Ohio, Black infants are nearly 3 times more likely to die than white infants. Racist structures and policies have made this so, but as a state, we now have the opportunity to take a step in the right direction for our parents and children. As a legislator, you have the power to support and pass H.B. 142. As you are all aware, this bill would allow Medicaid coverage for licensed doula services, which is essential to equitable access to doulas in our state. In addition to the financial aspects of this bill, it acknowledges doulas as part of a birthing team that ensures mental, emotional, informative support and advocacy for pregnant women. This is an incredible step forward because doulas hold historical and cultural impact on Indigenous and African communities with positive birth outcomes for parent and child. This acknowledgment 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.

I want to thank the committee Chairman, Vice-Chair, Ranking Members, and all the members for the opportunity to submit written testimony for the Senate Health



Committee and the chance to testify in support of House Bill 142. I am a strong proponent of the passage of this safe birthing bill to provide a pathway to make doula services a recognized profession in Ohio and create a path for positive outcomes for birthing parents and children within the state of Ohio.

Thank you for your consideration,

Anastasia Martinez

Senior Campaign Manager

Ohio Women's Alliance/Ohio Women's Alliance Action Fund