

Representative Jean Schmidt  
Chair, Families & Aging Committee  
Ohio House of Representatives  
77 South High Street  
Columbus, Ohio 43215

Chair Schmidt,

I write on behalf of the Ohio Dental Hygienists' Association (ODHA) in support of House Bill 7, which was introduced in the House on February 15, 2023 by Representative Andrea White and Representative Latyna M. Humphrey.

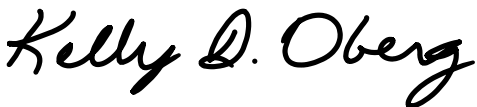
The rate of infant mortality in the United States is alarming. Ohio's infant mortality in 2018 and 2019 was 6.9 per 1,000 live births according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). House Bill 7 will help Ohio achieve the national goal of 6.0 or fewer infant deaths per 1,000 live births by addressing infant mortality.

A pregnancy-related death occurs during gestation and up to one year after. A detailed assessment published by the CDC of 1,000 pregnancy-related deaths between 2017 and 2019 shows that more than 84% of the deaths could have been avoided. House Bill 7 also addresses maternal mortality by expanding both prenatal and postnatal services, as well as infant and toddler services and supports. We can improve the health and development outcomes not only for babies and mothers but the family unit.

The CDC data shows that nearly 60% to 75% of pregnant women have gingivitis, an early stage of periodontal disease. If gingivitis is not treated, a gum infection develops and the bone that supports the teeth can be lost, which is known as periodontitis. Periodontitis has been associated with poor pregnancy outcomes, including preterm birth and low birth weight.

As dental hygienists, we are aware of the importance of good oral health during pregnancy for the mother and the baby's overall health. We also know the significance that the formative years have on the child's physical, mental, and oral health. HB 7 supports strong foundations for Ohio mothers and babies in their first one thousand days.

Sincerely,



Kelly Oberg, RDH, BS  
President  
Ohio Dental Hygienists' Association

CC: Vice Chair Melanie Miller  
Ranking Member Sedrick Denson  
Representative Tim Barhorst  
Representative Darnell Brewer

May 2, 2023

Representative Sarah Fowler Arthur

Representative Scott Lipps

Representative Beth Liston

Representative Susan Manchester

Representative Adam Mathews

Representative Lauren McNally

Representative Tracy Richardson

Representative Monica Robb Blasdel

Representative Anita Somani

Representative Andrea White