

The United States has the highest infant and maternal mortality rates compared to all other high-income countries even though our nation spends the most on health care. Statistics are even more abysmal for America's Black and poor communities. The New York Times Magazine devoted an entire issue to this crisis in 2018 and highlighted the expansion of the midwifery model of care as a cost-effective and significantly impactful solution.

I gave birth to all five of my children, now ages 30 to 11, at home with the assistance of traditional midwives. In the late 1990s, when I was pregnant with my second child, several other mothers and I created Ohio Friends of Midwives, which I lead for several years. During that time, I participated in the Ohio legislature's study council on the scope and status of Ohio's traditional midwives. After more than a year, the study council, chaired by Merle Kearns (R-Springfield) and Joan (R-Delaware Co.), determined that Ohio's traditional midwives provide essential care that should remain both legal and unregulated..

In recent years, momentum has grown to address the infant and maternal mortality crisis in Ohio. House Bill 545, unlike prior legislative proposals, would expand midwifery care in Ohio in ways that would Ohio's reduce maternity deserts, greatly improve outcomes for mothers and infants and do so without removing medical freedom for Ohioans to choose traditional midwives for their pregnancy, labor, delivery and postpartum care.

House Bill 545 is a comprehensive step forward in maternal and infant care for Ohio's families that will bring much-needed solutions to the alarming crisis facing pregnant mothers in obtaining wholistic, life-saving care that has proven to both improve outcomes and save lives. I strongly encourage your support of the passage of House Bill 545.