



**HB 190 – Designate Black Maternal Health Week
Sponsor Testimony
Representative Andrea White**

Chair Lipps, Vice Chair Stewart, Ranking member Liston, and members of the Public Health Policy Committee, thank you for allowing us to come and testify on House Bill 190, that will designate the week of April 11 to April 17 as Black Maternal Health week.

As we know, maternal mortality in the state of Ohio is among the worst in the entire nation- this a problem we must address. Through working on HB7, The Strong Foundations Act, I have seen and heard from stakeholders and community partners from across the state who have continuously reminded us how terrible our maternal and infant mortality rates are in this state. By designating this week as Black Maternal Health Week and continuing to promote legislation such as the Strong Foundations Act, we shine a spotlight down the path of next steps needed to address this problem.

The wellbeing of our mothers and our infants is a cornerstone of our communities and will determine the health of generations to come. We as a legislature need to address the health of our Black mothers and infants who experience significant disparities in our current maternal health system. If we continue to neglect this issue, the effects we will feel in our communities – from family trauma and stability to economic impact – will be substantial and their implications will continue to threaten the livelihood of our families. In 2021, Black babies were over three times more likely to die before their first birthday. Black women are two and a half times more likely to die from pregnancy related causes. Over the last decade, infant mortality for Black babies has been 164% higher than it has been for White babies. In Montgomery County, in 2019, the infant mortality rate for Black babies was nearly twice as high as White babies (6.2/1,000 compared to 3.4/1,000). Furthermore, Black babies accounted for 43% of all fetal and infant losses in 2021 but represented only 22% of the live births, while White babies accounted for only 21% of all fetal and infant losses but represented 33% of the live births. These disproportionate numbers are indicative that change is needed in helping Black moms and babies receive the treatment they need to thrive, flourish and live healthy and productive lives. By designating this week, we are seeking to raise awareness on an issue that has caused immense suffering for so many Ohioans.

Our children are our present and future in Ohio and if we cannot secure their wellbeing, we will not prosper. We want all Ohioans to be able to live up to their God-given potentials. This bill is a next step toward improving Black maternal health and will serve as a pathway for future legislation as we continue to acknowledge the disparities faced by the citizens in our state.

Chair Lipps, Vice Chair Stewart, Ranking Member Liston, and members of the Public Health Policy Committee, thank you again for allowing us to testify and we will now stand for any questions.