

Proponent Testimony for HB 190
House Public Health Policy Committee
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Chair Rep. Lipps, Vice Chair Rep. Stewart, and Ranking Member Rep. Liston, and members of the Public Health Policy Committee,

Thank you for allowing me to testify today. My name is Jazmin Long, and I am the president and CEO of Birthing Beautiful Communities (BBC) . I am writing in support of the proposed HB 190, which would support a week dedicated to Black Maternal Health Week. Nationally, the week of April 11 - 17 is recognized as Black Maternal Health Week. BBC was founded in 2014 as a perinatal support and workforce development agency, providing services in Cuyahoga and Summit counties for new and expectant women, working to prevent and reduce the black infant mortality rates that drive Ohio as one of the worst states for infant deaths in the country. The perinatal period is defined as during pregnancy through postpartum. BBC provides comprehensive support from early pregnancy, attendance at the labor and delivery, and for up to one year after the baby is born, a total average of 80 weeks. The 50+ staff members are trained perinatal support specialists, with a core foundation of doula values. Doula, which means “a woman who serves”, historically and presently provides continuous emotional support for a pregnant, birthing or postpartum mother, during her greatest time of need and vulnerability.

As we at BBC continues to raise awareness of health disparities in minority communities around maternal and infant health, we want to take the time to uplift Black Maternal Health Week as an opportunity for education to the broader community about these disparities. Held annually on April 11-17th, BMHW is a week-long campaign founded and led by the Black Mamas Matter Alliance to build awareness, activism, and community-building to amplify the voices, perspectives and lived experiences of Black Mamas and birthing people. The week is intentionally held during National Minority Health Month and begins on April 11th annually to join dozens of global organizations in marking this day as International Day for Maternal Health and Rights – an opportunity to advocate for the elimination of maternal mortality globally. The activities and conversations that can be hosted throughout the week intentionally center the values and traditions of the reproductive and birth justice movements.

Chair Lipps, Vice Chair Stewart, Ranking Member Liston, and members of the Public Health Policy Committee, thank you again for allowing us to submit this written testimony in support of HB190.