



House Public Health Policy Committee

H.B. 538 Proponent Testimony

Ohio Commission on Minority Health

November 20, 2024

Good morning Chairman Mathews, Ranking Minority Member Liston, and esteemed members of the House Public Health Policy Committee. My name is Angela Dawson. I am the Director of the Ohio Commission on Minority Health where I am honored to serve. I appreciate the opportunity to provide proponent testimony for House Bill 538. House Bill 538 proposes the month of May is designated as “Lupus Awareness Month”.

The Commission extends thanks to House Bill 538 sponsors Representative Brown and Representative Upchurch and the cosponsors of this important bill can increase the awareness of this debilitating disease.

The Ohio Commission on Minority Health is dedicated to eliminating disparities in minority health through innovative strategies and financial opportunities, public health promotion, legislative action, public policy and systems change.

The Commission’s FY25 appropriation of \$118,000 provides small annual grants to five community-based organizations to provide optimal health support groups for persons with lupus and their care givers as well as support for Lupus Awareness Month activities.

The community-based agencies awarded grants under the Lupus Program provide monthly optimal health support groups for individuals with lupus, and their caregivers. The optimal health support group is designed to empower program participants to better manage their disease, improve health literacy and encourage patient participation with their health care providers. Program participants are also provided educational materials on Lupus to include area facilities and physicians that offer medical treatment for lupus-related medical conditions.

The Lupus Foundation of America estimates that 1.5 million Americans have a form of lupus. Approximately 90% of lupus sufferers are women.

The disease is also more prevalent in minority populations. Lupus is two to three times more prevalent among African American, Latino, Asian American and Native American women than among white women.

The Ohio Department of Health 2018 Ohio Lupus Needs Assessment identified that the true burden of Lupus is largely unknown and recommended the need to develop targeted outreach strategies to effectively engage impacted communities.

Lupus symptoms mimic other diseases which results in an on average six-year delay in a definitive diagnosis and subsequent treatment.

Awareness efforts such as Lupus Awareness Month is crucial because this disorder, including its signs, symptoms, and treatments are still widely misunderstood.

The Ohio Commission on Minority Health is appreciative of the opportunity to provide proponent testimony and encourages support for the passage of this legislation.