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State Representative Adam Holmes
Ohio House of Representatives

Thank you Chair Wiggam, Vice Chair Dean and Ranking Member Brennan for letting Rep Thomas and I introduce HB 479 to make September 19th Stillbirth Prevention Day.

We are here for several reasons:

-We want to use this awareness day to help target existing health care resources that are those most in need: pregnant mothers, especially those with low income or limited access to health care.

-We want to recognize that Ohio is a statistical outlier with still birth and infant mortality rates of our black mothers and babies.

-We are supporting our shared fundamental belief that every human life is precious, and we want to do everything we can to support healthy human lives.

Stillbirth is a devastating loss for the families that experience it. According to the Center for Disease Control, in the United States, 1 in 175 births are affected by stillbirth each year amounting to approximately 21,000 stillbirths annually;

-the number of stillbirths each year is greater than the number of babies that die during the first year of life.

-annual stillbirths are more than ten times the number of annual deaths due to Sudden Infant Death Syndrome (SIDS);

-stillbirth occurs across all demographics and in otherwise healthy pregnancies.

-It is most common, however, among women who are African American, at two times more likely than white women to have a stillbirth; over 5,000 were experienced by black mothers;

Stillbirths are also common among people who,

-- are of lower socioeconomic status;

-- are diagnosed with high blood pressure, diabetes, obesity, or other medical conditions;

--are 35 years of age or older;

-- smoke cigarettes while pregnant;

-- have previously experienced pregnancy loss; or have multiple pregnancies, for example triplets; and

While the rate of stillbirth has declined since the 1940s due to improvements in maternity care, in recent years, the decline has slowed or halted.

In Ohio, hundreds of babies are stillborn every year. In 2021, 760 babies were lost to stillbirth in Ohio and we average about 6.2 fetal deaths per 1000 live births. Unfortunately, Ohio's stillbirth numbers are higher than the national averages. 30% of the mothers reporting stillbirth identified as black or African American; while representing about 13% of our total population.

In summary, we hope that raising awareness of stillbirth issues in Ohio saves lives of mothers and babies, accelerates improved birthing practices and unifies all of us (men and women, urban and rural) into continued cooperative support in the pursuit of healthier lives for all Ohioans.

Sincerely,

Adam Holmes
Ohio State Representative
District 97