



June 13, 2023

Chairman Roemer
Ohio House of Representatives
House Ways and Means Committee

Chair Roemer, Vice Chair Lorenz, Ranking Member Troy, and members of the committee:

Thank you for allowing me to provide written testimony in support of HB 118. My name is Dr. Meg Barcroft and I have been a physician taking care of children in Columbus, Ohio for the past four years at Nationwide Children's Hospital. I am currently pursuing additional specialty training in neonatal intensive care and hope to continue to serve the infants and families of Ohio for years to come.

While this is a tax exemption bill at its core, I feel the potential impact of HB 118 cannot be fiscally estimated. With this bill, families will be better able to provide items, crucial to the health and safety for their infants. The ability for a family to afford the necessities required to care for their infant should be attainable for all.

Infant mortality, or the death of a child before their first birthday, is an ongoing crisis in Ohio. Infant mortality is frequently used as an important measure of the health of a society. This state that both you and I have chosen to serve can and must do better to help advance the health of our state, our infants, our future.

Two of the top five causes of infant deaths in our state are due to sleep-related and external injuries. These are preventable deaths. There is significant scientific evidence to support the fact that a safe sleep environment saves lives. Simply put, infants should be sleeping alone on their back, in a crib, to be safe. I can teach parents about this safe sleep environment, but I can't help them afford it in their own home. This bill can assist more families to afford the basic safety measures like cribs and infant monitoring devices, preventing many potential injuries and deaths.

I have also unfortunately cared for multiple young children impacted by the high cost of safety restraint devices. I once admitted an infant to the hospital following a motor vehicle collision in which the infant was not properly restrained. When discussed with the parents, they stated their car seat was knowingly out-of-date, but it was the best they could afford. That child would likely not have suffered a brain bleed if they had the proper safety restraint prior to that collision. While devastating, this story does not stand alone. Many families cannot afford proper safety restraints for their children which can have profound life-altering or potentially life-ending impact.

I am an Ohio native and care deeply for the children and families of this state. As a pediatrician, I can teach parents the importance of safety and wellbeing for their children through the use of basic hygiene principles, safe sleep practices, and safe transportation. As a critical care trainee, I help serve our youngest and most vulnerable population, using all our medical technology and advances to help every child make it to their first birthday. What I can't do is help families be able to afford the essentials to keep children safe in their daily lives. This bill helps to address the cost barrier associated with these

basic infant supplies. House bill 118 helps families keep their children safe, can move the needle of on our infant mortality rate, and can continue to make Ohio's future brighter.

Thank you for your time and consideration on this important bill.

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