

## **Testimony before the Senate Finance Committee**

Tiniqua Freeman

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House Bill 33

Members of the Senate Finance Committee, thank you for the opportunity to testify in support of funding for Healthy Beginnings at Home in House Bill 33.

I have been advising Healthy Beginnings in Summit County because my experience with housing insecurity and pregnancy a few years ago is similar to the families we are trying to help.

I am a Kent State Graduate who has finally broken barriers for my family. I had obtained what I thought was a decent job and was working to accomplish my goals of grad school and providing the best I could for my children. I was working 40 hours+ at times to meet the needs of my client who I was responsible for assisting to meet their own personal needs.

At the time of helping others climb the ladder of success, I had begun to lose control of my own surroundings. When I found out I was pregnant it was almost like an avalanche. My car broke down and I fell behind with bills, including rent. After a couple months of needing to call off work due to no transportation I found myself in a position that I needed my own advocate to help me. I was pregnant and the stress I endured actually cost me my child and housing. Losing what I had worked so hard to accomplish was devastating but losing the life of my child was one of the hardest things I've ever had to encounter.

The anxiety of pregnancy can take such a toll, but when you add the stress of being homeless and pregnant it is toxic! This leads to more emergency department visits, longer stays and higher healthcare spending. Poor health during pregnancy can lead to long-term health deficits that are overwhelmingly costly.

Healthy Beginnings at Home gives women and their babies a chance to thrive. House Bill 33 includes funding to expand Healthy Beginnings. We are asking simply to maintain what the Governor and House version accomplished.

In closing, the lives of the babies that we are investing in right now will be the people who are to care for many of us in 20 or 30 years. They will also become our teachers, our social workers, our doctors, our clergy, our structural engineers, maybe even our elected official one day! Let's invest now and not only save money, but also save lives.