


**PR=GNANCY
CARE CENTER**
of Wayne County

February 20, 2024

Dear Chair Matt Dolan, Vice-Chair Jerry Cirino, Ranking Member Vernon Sykes, and the Members of the Senate Finance Committee:

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Kate Hopek

I am writing to you in support of S.B. 159. I have the privilege of serving as the Executive Director of the Pregnancy Care Center of Wayne County located in Wooster, Ohio. This year we are celebrating our 40th anniversary of serving our community with life-affirming services. Over the last 40 years, we have gone from providing two services (pregnancy tests and material assistance) to our clients, to now we provide 14 different services. These services are all provided at no cost to our clients. Each individual service meets a distinct need in our community. Since 2021 our center has doubled the amount of clients we serve. In 2023, we had close to 5,000 client visits. In addition to that, our Abstinence Education team saw close to 2,500 6th-12th grade students last year. And we are not slowing down. In January of this year, we had 515 client visits, which was a 38% increase from what we had last year. We are a team of 9 staff members, and we utilize over 40 volunteers each week to be able to meet the demand. We are also a medical clinic. From 2022 to 2023 we had a 125% increase in our medical patients. Since COVID, our medical clinic has taken on a majority of the STD testing in our area due to the health department not providing the service. Our local OBGYN's have asked us to add to our STD panel that we test for because of the risk to patients if they are pregnant. Because it is our mission to help women and families, we met the need. Our annual budget has more than doubled from 2021 to 2024. Thankfully, we have been able to receive funding from the Parenting and Pregnancy Grant to help with the budget, but we are limited to what we can spend the funding on. For example, we are not able to use the funding for our STD testing and treatments, our programs for our fathers, and our programs that we offer in our local men and women's rehabilitation centers.

I share all of this because S.B. 159 would have a significant impact to our center, and all Ohio centers. Our center is primarily donor funded, and most of those donors are individuals. I am excited about the potential to tell them that their donation could be matched dollar for dollar, and receive a tax credit for it. We not only saw an increase in clients last year, but we also saw an increase in donations, and I believe this bill would only increase those efforts.

At the end of 2023, a donor walked in with a check for \$100,000. This donor had only been to our center for a tour one time, and they had only been to two of our events in the past. She told me, "We believe that our money will be used to the maximum potential here and serve the community better than anywhere else." It is extremely humbling for someone to tell you that about your organization.



Enhancing Trust

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**PREGNANCY
CARE CENTER**
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I believe with a bill like this one, our center will be abundantly blessed and will be able to have an even bigger impact in our community. We appreciate the grants that we receive, but it is the donors that sustain our ministry. This bill would have a greater impact in us sustaining the funding needed for our yearly budgets.

As our Board and staff look to the next 1-5 years, we are already planning to open a second location. This will allow us to better serve all of Wayne County. Some clients have to drive 35 minutes to our location, so we want to be more accessible to them. We are also planning to bring on an additional staff member to serve as a Case Manager for our clients. We have seen first hand the impact in someone's life if we can walk alongside of them during one of their most difficult circumstances. With a little bit of help, our clients can go from surviving to thriving. We help them get insurance, employment, childcare, housing, driver's licenses, cars, and the list goes on. We do all of this to help them be the best parent they can be and provide the most stable environment for their kids. Our goal is help them live free from any sort of government assistance. The funding that we could receive because of this bill would help us achieve both of these goals and be able to sustain them.

My goal in sharing all of this with you is to give you a glimpse into the work of our center. A client who recently came to us shared with us that she recently went to the hospital for her OB care. She said, "I wish you all were in the hospitals. You listen to us. You care about us. You want the best for us." Her words sum up our goal when meeting with clients. We listen to their needs, we care for and support them, and we want them to know that the best is yet to come.

Thank You for taking the time to read my written testimony, and thank you for your service to Ohio.

Blessings to all of you,

Bekah Hilty
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