



FINANCE
COMMITTEE

Witness Form

Today's Date 6/24/24

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Organization Representing: Heartbeats & Ohio Coalition of Pregnancy Centers

Testifying on Bill Number: SB 159

Testimony: Verbal Written Both

Testifying As: Proponent Opponent Interested Party

Are you a Registered Lobbyist? Yes No

Special Requests: Please note that witness has a hearing impairment.

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

Good afternoon. My name is Liz McCullough. I am the Executive Director of a Central Ohio Pregnancy Center with two locations, Heartbeats-Newark and Heartbeats-Zanesville. We served women and families from 75 Ohio zip codes in 2022, and in a typical year, approximately 300 babies are born to the moms and dads we serve. I am also honored to serve and represent the Ohio Coalition of Pregnancy Centers as a Regional Coordinator.

I stand before you today in support of Senate Bill 159. As a member of our great state's community, I believe it is imperative that we continue to take decisive action to address critical issues such as infant mortality and maternal health outcomes, while also recognizing the invaluable contributions pregnancy centers provide in our society in this regard.

Ohio currently ranks fourth in the nation in infant mortality rates, a sobering statistic that demands our urgent attention. Pregnancy centers play a pivotal role in addressing this issue by providing free comprehensive medical services, support, education, and practical resources to pregnant women and families. From early verification of pregnancy to first trimester ultrasounds, these centers facilitate early prenatal care, leading to positive maternal health outcomes and reducing the risk of infant mortality.

Why Your Support Matters:

- 1. Infant Safety:**
 - Safe sleeping environments (cribs, bassinets)
 - Car seats to ensure safe travel
 - Educational resources on infant care
- 2. Achieving Milestones:**
 - Developmental toys and books
 - Nutritional guidance to support growth
 - Access to pediatric care and wellness check-ups
- 3. Practical Essentials:**
 - Adequate supply of diapers for daycare and health
 - Baby clothing and hygiene products
 - Strollers and baby carriers for mobility

The Diaper Dilemma:

- Diapers are essential for daycare enrollment, enabling parents to work.
- Diapers are crucial for the health and well-being of infants.
- Medicaid and WIC do not cover diapers, creating financial strain for many families.

Additionally, pregnancy centers offer a multitude of services that extend far beyond medical care. In addition to parenting classes and essential resources, these centers offer no-cost after-abortion support to women and men in need of processing through their loss and grief. Furthermore, many pregnancy centers provide no-cost STD/STI testing,

addressing critical public health concerns and promoting overall well-being within our communities.

It's essential to note that my centers alone serve thousands of Ohio youth annually with no-cost sexual risk avoidance and healthy relationships education, empowering the next generation with the knowledge and skills to make informed and responsible choices. Our program is offered at no cost to schools through the generosity of our donors. Our program meets the curriculum requirements of the Ohio Revised Code, (Sections 3313.60 and 3313.6011).

The financial impact of pregnancy centers cannot be overstated. With 123 centers across the state, thousands of no-cost pregnancy tests and ultrasounds are administered by credentialed medical professionals, saving the state significant healthcare costs. By offering timely assistance to uninsured women facing crisis pregnancies, these centers mitigate the need for costly interventions and promote early access to prenatal care, resulting in long-term savings for taxpayers.

How Your Support Can Help:

- **Tax Credits:** By leveraging tax credits, supporters can contribute directly to pregnancy resource centers.
- **Empowerment:** Your contributions help families move from government dependency to self-sufficiency.
- **Community Impact:** Together, we provide essential resources that promote the health and development of infants and children.

Win-Win Partnership: Supporting pregnancy centers through tax credits not only maximizes your financial stewardship but also plays a vital role in equipping women and families with the resources they need.

Furthermore, pregnancy centers promote self-sufficiency and dignity among families by providing incentivized programs that offer essential infant items and toddler items. By empowering parents to break the cycle of government dependence and unemployment, pregnancy centers foster a sense of community cohesion and resilience.

In addition to their tangible contributions, pregnancy centers embody the spirit of compassion and solidarity that defines our state. Inspired by our motto, "With God All Things Are Possible," these centers serve as beacons of hope and support for individuals navigating the most challenging circumstances of life. We stand ready to walk hand in hand with our fellow citizens on their journey towards stronger families and communities.

As a coalition, we equip Ohio pregnancy centers, unite our efforts, mobilize and leverage our resources across Ohio! We are engaged in initiatives that reduce the risk of infant mortality, improve maternal health outcomes, and strengthen the family unit as we help provide relief from financial burdens that become obstacles to infant and childhood health and safety.

Senate Bill 159 is a prudent, practical, and compassionate use of public funds, and we ask that each of you would wholeheartedly extend your support, knowing that by doing so, we affirm our commitment to the welfare of Ohio's women and families!

Thank you.

Liz McCullough, Executive Director, Heartbeats
Regional Coordinator, Ohio Coalition of Pregnancy Centers