



Ohio Senate Finance Committee

Testimony on HB 7

The Strong Foundations Act

December 17th, 2024

Chair Dolan, Vice Chair Cirino, Ranking member Sykes, and members of the Senate Finance Committee, thank you for this opportunity to testify in support of House Bill 7, The Strong Foundations Act. My name is Dustin McKee and I am the Chief Executive Officer of the Ohio Psychological Association (OPA).

The Ohio Psychological Association Represents Ohio's more than 3,600 licensed psychologists. As Ohio Psychologists, our members are deeply committed to ensuring that every child has a chance to grow up healthy through a strong foundation of support and care in their first 1,000 days of life. Doing so can have a dramatic impact on the course of their development, and on outcomes related to their long-term health, behavioral health, economic and social wellness. OPA echoes the urgency with which our sponsors have spoken about the need to continue to address Ohio's infant mortality and maternal mortality rates. We would like to thank Representatives White and Humphrey for introducing this legislation. We would also like to thank Members of the Ohio Senate for successfully advocating for new investments to address this issue in HB 33.

As Representative White stated in her previous testimony "House Bill 7 strategically addresses Ohio's infant and maternal mortality crisis, while sharply focusing on improving health and developmental outcomes for babies, mothers, and families by expanded prenatal, postnatal and infant and toddler services and supports".

There has been a significant amount of research that has established the link between the mental health of mothers and their infants and children, and the social determinants of health and wellness. It is also well established that a mother's mental health during the perinatal period has a significant impact on the health, mental health and long-term social and emotional outcomes of the infant and child. HB 7 proactively addresses these issues.

HB 7 will advance policies and practices that research has shown to have a positive impact on improving both the social determinants of the health and mental health and the quality of mental health for mothers and children.

DC 0-5

Clearly, there are many positive policies advanced by HB 7 for mothers and very young children. However, the Ohio Psychological Association would like to highlight the importance of the provisions in the bill: "Encouraging use of the Diagnostic Classification of Mental Health and Developmental Disorders of Infancy and Early Childhood published by ZERO TO THREE and known as the "DC:0-5" for assessing and diagnosing infants, toddlers, and young children, and permit use of ICD-10 diagnosis codes, published by the United States Department of Health and Human Services, for Medicaid billing."

By adopting the DC:0-5 and integrating it with ICD-10 codes for Medicaid billing Ohio will bridge the gap between developmentally informed diagnostics and the administrative requirements of our health and behavioral healthcare systems. This ensures that infants and young children receive the care they need, reduces barriers for providers, and supports early intervention, which is critical for lifelong health and development.

Ohio's psychologists support the advancement of this policy to ensure accurate, developmentally appropriate diagnoses for young children, promote early intervention, and improve lifelong outcomes. These changes would increase access to services for vulnerable populations, support the mental health workforce, and reduce long-term healthcare costs. OPA respectfully encourages members of this committee to include the provisions mentioned above to help enhance mental health outcomes for Ohio's children, strengthen Ohio families, and foster a healthier, more resilient population across our Great State.

In conclusion, OPA would like to again thank Representatives White and Humphrey for introducing this legislation. We also thank you, members of the Ohio Senate Finance Committee for the opportunity provide our testimony to you about this important legislation. . I would be happy to answer any questions at this time.