



State Senator Nickie J. Antonio - District 23
State Senator Hearcel F. Craig - District 15

Senate Health Committee

June 12, 202

Sponsor Testimony SB 69

Senator Craig:

Good afternoon Chair Huffman, Vice-Chair Johnson, Ranking Member Antonio and members of the Health Committee. Thank you for the opportunity to testify today in support of Ohio Senate Bill 69. This bill seeks to designate the week including March 22nd as Ohio Doula Awareness Week.

In a world where maternal and infant health outcomes remain critical areas of concern, the role of doulas cannot be overstated. Doulas provide invaluable emotional, physical, and informational support to mothers before, during, and after childbirth. Their presence has been shown to improve birth outcomes, reduce the need for medical interventions, and enhance the overall childbirth experience for families.

Ohio Doula Awareness Week will serve multiple vital functions. It will celebrate the dedicated professionals who serve as doulas, increase public awareness about the benefits of doula care, and encourage the incorporation of doula services into standard maternal care practices across the state.

By designating this week, we aim to foster a deeper understanding and appreciation of the significant contributions doulas make to the well-being of mothers and infants. This initiative aligns with our broader commitment to improving healthcare outcomes and addressing disparities in maternal and infant health.

I would like to thank my esteemed colleague and joint sponsor, Senator Nickie Antonio, for her support and leadership for this bill. We can make Ohio a leader in maternal and infant health by supporting and recognizing the invaluable work of doulas.

Members of the committee, thank you very much for the consideration of this bill and the chance to provide testimony. I would be happy to take any questions at this time.

Leader Antonio:

S.B. 69 designates the week of March 22nd Ohio Doula Awareness Week. Doulas are trained professionals who provide continuous physical, emotional and informational support to a mother before, during and shortly after childbirth.

Doulas work to reduce the stress levels and uncertainty that come along with pregnancy and can significantly impact the health of an expectant parent and their baby.

According to a 2016 study, women who receive doula care have a 22 percent lower chance of having a preterm birth.

According to Ohio March for Dimes, Black women in Ohio have a preterm birth rate 48% higher than other women. That is a horrible, eye-opening statistic and we must do something about it.

Doula care is among the most promising approaches to mitigating disparities in maternal health by providing individualized, culturally appropriate, and patient-centered emotional support and advocacy.

Ohio Doula Week will help educate the public about the critical role doulas and doula care play in increasing maternal health outcomes.

Furthermore, recognition of doulas and doula care continues the conversation regarding racial disparities in maternal health in Ohio.

The week of March 22nd corresponds with the spring equinox in the Northern Hemisphere. The spring equinox represents the return of fertility and new life in countless cultures, making it a fitting time to raise awareness and celebrate doulas as they help mothers and birthing people bring new life into this world.

Members of the committee, thank you for this opportunity to provide testimony for this bill, and I appreciate your consideration. I'd be happy to answer any questions.