



**House Children and Human Services Committee  
House Bill 96  
Angela Newman-White, Executive Director  
First Year Cleveland  
February 27, 2025**

Chair White, Vice Chair Salvo, Ranking Member Lett, and members of the House Children and Human Services Committee, thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony on House Bill 96. My name is Angela Newman-White, and I am the Executive Director of First Year Cleveland. Our mission is to mobilize the community through partnerships and a unified strategy to reduce infant deaths. We are committed to ensuring that every baby lives to see their first birthday, and every mother has the resources and support to celebrate that milestone.

On behalf of our partners and families we serve, I would like to say thank you to Governor DeWine, his administration, and you, the members of the General Assembly, for your continued support for families to thrive.

Between 2017-2023, in Cuyahoga County, there were 759 infant and 595 fetal deaths. This means over 1,350 families experienced the devastation of loss. It is imperative that we not only have necessary supports in place for pregnant and parenting families, but most importantly ensure families have access to basic needs like housing, food, transportation, and employment.

Governor DeWine's budget expands access to quality childcare, benefiting families with incomes up to 200 percent of the federal poverty level. This initiative aims to provide safe, reliable, and high-quality child care options across schools, centers, and home-based settings for families in need. Additionally, the budget introduces a state child tax credit for families with children from birth to six years old, with the goal of reducing poverty, supporting working families, and investing in the growth and well-being of young children. The budget further extends support for vital programs such as Help Me Grow and broadens the reach of the statewide Family Connects program, which offers free, in-home nurse consultations for families with newborns, delivering essential resources to ensure a healthy start for both parents and children.

Your support for these valued interventions and family supports will provide many families the opportunity to receive high quality services that will lead to better outcomes. It is important to remember that creating conditions for all families to thrive will lead to the best possible outcomes for our communities.

With costs rising and wages remaining stagnant, it is difficult for families to survive and thrive. The current minimum wage in Ohio is now \$10.70/hour, which at fulltime is \$22,256 a year. According to the National Low Income Housing Coalition, a single would need to make an annual salary of \$42,293 to afford a two-bedroom apartment. Based on the current minimum wage, this means she would need to work 80 hours a week based the recommendation of 30% of gross monthly income allocated for housing expenses.

Funding for rapid re-housing and other rental assistance programs for pregnant women and families is vital. First Year Cleveland recommends funding for the Healthy Beginnings at Home project that increases the housing support for families in the state of Ohio. We recently launched the project and the federal budget changes put our families at risk for losing their housing. We also recommend establishing low-cost financial incentives that will help public housing authorities implement housing preferences for pregnant women who are homeless or experiencing housing instability.

Thank you for allowing me the opportunity to testify today. With your support, we can help mothers across Cuyahoga County and Ohio access the resources they need to protect their health and their babies' lives. I'm happy to answer any questions you may have.