



Emma Martinez
House Bill 96
House Children and Human Services Committee
February 27, 2025

Chairman White, Vice Chairman Salvo, Ranking Member Lett, and members of the committee, thank you for the opportunity to testify today on House Bill 96. My name is Emma Martinez and I am the Director of Legislative Affairs at Ohio Right to Life. On behalf of Ohio Right to Life and our statewide membership, chapters and affiliates, I am here to advocate for the state funding that has a transformative roll in supporting mothers and their babies.

Across Ohio, there are well over 100 Pregnancy Resource Centers providing hands on support to families in crisis. These centers work tirelessly to provide access to prenatal care, counselling, parenting classes, infant necessities, and so much more. In their work they support thousands of families in Ohio to grow and flourish. Having access to a pregnancy center can make all the difference for the confidence a woman feels stepping into motherhood, which is why I ask you to maintain the funding for the Parenting and Pregnancy Program.

The Parenting and Pregnancy Program or OPP offers grants to non-profits that are providing vital services to pregnant women and new parents. Pregnancy Centers rely on donations and the support from their communities, but, by offering grant funds, we can partner in expanding the available services and increase their capacity. In the previous budget, this OPP was funded at \$7,000,000 per fiscal year; Governor DeWine has increased that to \$10,000,000 per fiscal year in his version of the budget and Ohio Right to Life advocates for that increase to be kept in the House version of the budget.

Ohio women are also receiving services from maternity homes across the state offering housing and assistance getting back on their feet. Housing is a real need that can prevent a woman from choosing her baby when she truly desires to, and there are individual homes across the state answering that need. Governor DeWine established the Maternal and Infant Housing Assistance line item appropriating \$500,000 per fiscal year to support these initiatives to provide pregnant mothers a home.

Along with the efforts to support moms and babies who are in crisis, Ohio Right to Life recognizes there are many instances when children are left without loving, stable families and become eligible for adoption. While many families are willing to adopt, it is a long and expensive process that can be incredibly draining of resources. To address the costs, the General Assembly created the Adoption Grant Program in 2023. This program offers one time funds of \$10,000, \$15,000, if the adoptive parent was a foster caregiver for the child, or \$20,000, if the child has been diagnosed with special needs. Receiving these funds can make all the difference in a family's capacity to adopt and thrive, and hopefully adopt again. This program is currently funded at \$34,000,000 per fiscal year and we ask you to maintain those funds.

Chairman White, Vice Chair Salvo, Ranking Member Lett and members of the committee, thank you again for the opportunity to testify on HB 96. I am happy to answer any questions you may have.