

Micah Macklin

Life After Healing

May 23, 2025

Ohio Senate Ingram, Committee Chairperson Cirino, Vice Chair Chavez, Ranking Member Hicks-Hudson, and Members of the Senate Finance Committee:

My name is Micah, and I am a mother and Black maternal health advocate from Cincinnati. I am here today to urge you to restore the Governor's budget proposal, which included critical investments in child care, maternal and infant health, and early learning.

As someone who has benefitted from Medicaid access for moms and babies including a Medicaid sponsored doula and lost a child due to the implicit bias and racism of our maternal health system, I know firsthand how important it is to restore the originally proposed infant vitality funds and stop the restrictions on the use of doula services to Medicaid eligible women.

In 2019, I had my daughter, Milani. As a first time mom, with all the information I did know, I didn't know much about what to expect with pregnancy, prenatal appointments, labor or postpartum. My joy was high and my anxiety was even higher, especially because I experienced symptoms early and consistently. I was nauseous 24/7, I had back pain that only intensified with the coming days, and being that I was away at college, separated from community and family, I was depressed.

Every day I suffered. Sometimes silently, as the depression and pain made it hard for me to get out of bed, and sometimes audibly whether the gagging or the crying. I was miserable. But when I went to my doctor's appointments, of white men and women, my cries of physical and mental pain were dismissed as a "normal pregnancy". And while I knew something was wrong, I wasn't sure what. So I met with another doctor, and then another. After being dismissed by three doctors and family, I stopped trying because maybe I was being overdramatic. So, I decided to stop complaining and just get through my pregnancy.

Unbeknownst to me, my pregnancy ended early because at 17 weeks and 7 days, I gave birth to my daughter at the hospital off of my college campus due to an incompetent cervix. She was alive for 15 minutes before she took her last breath in my hands, because she was so tiny. I was almost discharged from the hospital until a labor and delivery nurse spoke up about my clotting. I ended up staying the night due to major blood loss.

At 20 years old, I lost my daughter and almost lost my life due to the negligence that is maternal health. While my daughter's life couldn't be saved, her death was preventable. Milani's death was my call to action. I became a doula, I raised awareness, and I helped other mothers of lost to navigate the trauma that is Black maternal healthcare.

At 24 years old, when I found myself pregnant again, I'm sure you could imagine the anxiety I felt. I was nervous about my pregnancy, my birth, and most importantly my baby's life. Even now as a trained professional, my confidence in being handled with care and empathy were low. Sadly, I was right. I was met with pushback and malice from a doctor who didn't even care enough to read my chart. Slowly, but surely, my body started reacting to the stress causing not only frequent appointments, but trips to the ER. Fearing that the worst may happen again, I turned to my community, and was blessed with a Medicaid sponsored doula.

For the first time in 7 months, I felt relieved. A woman who looked like me, listened to me, could guide me, and advocate for me was in my corner. My symptoms became mild, the emergency visits seized, and my delivery was beautiful. I was able to deliver my rainbow baby no medication, no interventions, which I'm sure saved Medicaid thousands.

These investments will not only help children live but also boost Ohio's workforce and economy. I urge you to fully fund these initiatives to ensure every family gets the best outcome in life.

Thank you for your time and commitment to Ohio's children and families. I am happy to answer any questions.

Sincerely,

Micah Macklin