



**Ohio Senate Finance Committee  
Amended Substitute House Bill 96  
Danielle P. Tong, MPH, LSW | Executive Director  
CelebrateOne  
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Chair Cirino, Vice Chair Chavez, Ranking Member Hicks-Hudson, and distinguished members of the Senate Finance Committee, thank you for the opportunity to testify in regard to Amended Substitute House Bill 96, and particularly in support of the restoration of the as-introduced funding for infant vitality initiatives. My name is Danielle Tong, and I proudly serve as Executive Director of CelebrateOne, the City of Columbus' infant mortality reduction initiative.

In Ohio, we lose more than 900 babies each year, putting our state near the bottom in terms of infant mortality rankings. Too many residents from each of your represented counties are forced to bury their child before they have a chance to sing happy birthday – a devastating scenario that no parent, grandparent, or family member is prepared for when our babies enter the world. CelebrateOne, like Cradle Cincinnati and First Year Cleveland, is one of many collective impact initiatives around the state charged with improving our communities' social and economic conditions and systems of care so that every parent and child is able to thrive to and through the first year of life. But we can't and we don't do this work alone. Infant mortality is affected by not just medical care. It's a symptom of our social and economic policies and practices, and perhaps most telling, it's a reflection of our funding priorities.

Funding infant vitality efforts ensures that programs, like home visiting, that are designed to protect and improve birth outcomes can remain operational. It ensures that families have food, shelter, social supports, and economic mobility opportunities that allow them and their children to thrive. And it ensures that children born in our state grow up with the resources they need to become healthy, productive members of society. Continuous crucial investments in the programs and strategies that have been shown to support the health and wellbeing of Ohio families are greatly needed. Through the state budget, we as a state have an opportunity to prioritize the wellbeing of all Ohio infants and families and let the country know that this is the best place to have and raise a family.

On behalf of CelebrateOne, our partners, and the Franklin County and statewide residents that look to us, I thank the Senate Finance Committee for the opportunity to testify today. We appreciate your time and consideration and I am happy to answer any questions in-person or by email at [dptong@columbus.gov](mailto:dptong@columbus.gov).