



Friday, June 6, 2025

### **Testimony before the Senate Finance Committee**

Chairman Cirino, Vice-Chair Chavez, Ranking Member Hicks-Hudson, and members of the Senate Finance Committee, thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony. My name is Jill Kingston, and I am the Founder and President of Brigid's Path.

Brigid's Path is a licensed Residential Infant Care Center where babies born substance-exposed can withdraw in a home-like setting with inpatient level, high quality medical care. We provide strengths-based supportive and life skill-building services to the families of babies we serve, and we encourage moms and dads to participate in their babies' lives, which is critical to bonding and long-term family success. Since our doors opened in 2017, we have cared for nearly 300 babies and their families. Because of our unique non-hospital setting, innovative clinical care, and wraparound services for families, 85% of the babies we've served have stayed out of the foster care system and are now living in safe and happy homes with their own families. This level of family maintenance and foster care avoidance is unheard of.

Our facility was built with the specific needs of babies with neonatal abstinence syndrome (NAS) in mind – low lighting and quiet, home-like spaces that allow moms, dads and other caregivers to rock, change and feed their babies at all times of day and night. Brigid's Path is led by a nationally recognized team of experts in NAS care; including neonatologists, neonatal nurse practitioners, and registered nurses. Our trained volunteer cuddlers support babies and families with compassion. Together, we've become a national leader in caring for newborns exposed to substances.

I am here today to ask that you restore the \$1 million allocated to residential infant care centers in the Department of Children and Youth's infant vitality line item.

The General Assembly has a long history of financially supporting Brigid's Path, and I cannot thank you enough. In the last state budget, we asked the legislature to include temporary law language requiring the Ohio Departments of Medicaid and Children and Youth to work together to develop a sustainable pediatric recovery center service delivery model and reimbursement structure. The General Assembly did that, and we have been working closely with DCY and ODM over the past two year to stand up the pediatric recovery center service line and funding mechanism. ODM's Ohio Administrative Code rules will be effective soon,



marking the last step for the department to take to fulfill its responsibility. DCY fulfilled its obligation by allocating infant vitality funding to residential infant care centers.

The Senate's elimination of \$1 million for the purpose of establishing the pediatric recovery center service undermines the legislature's own directive in the last budget and makes it impossible for Brigid's Path to sustain its work.

Without the funding the Senate cut from DCY's budget for infant vitality, Brigid's Path quite literally will not stay open. We have stretched our private donations as far as they can possibly go. Last month, we initiated steps to reduce our operations in order to stay open. We eliminated 23 staff positions from a staff of 70 (including nurses, PCAs, and family advocates); we closed one of our nurseries; we cut the salaries of administrative staff; we terminated partnerships with longtime vendors and community partners; and we are turning babies and their families away.

If Brigid's Path closes, the babies who could otherwise receive medical care in a homelike setting while their parents develop life and child caring skills while on their recovery journey will instead be forced to get their care in hospital NICUs where, when ready to be discharged, they face an 70% greater likelihood of being placed in foster care than if they received services with us. Restoring the \$1 million in infant vitality funding for pediatric recovery centers like Brigid's Path is a valuable investment in the future of Ohio's children and families.

Sincerely

Jill Kingston  
Founder and President