

Greetings and thank you, Chair Huffman, Vice Chair Johnson, and Ranking Member Liston for this opportunity to share our desire to see House Bill 4 passed for the purpose of acknowledging September 19<sup>th</sup> as Stillbirth Prevention Day.

I am Dr. Michael Bullock, President of Miles' Mission. On October 11, 2021, our daughter Jennifer gave birth to her son Miles, who was stillborn. On October 13<sup>th</sup>, my wife and I held Miles for a few moments, kissed his cold cheeks, and said our goodbyes, making it one of the most painful days of my life. In the following months, I learned of the number of stillbirths that happen annually, with Ohio being in the top five in our country when it comes to fetal mortality. On average, there are almost 800 stillbirths a year, or a little more than 2 families a day who lose a baby to stillbirth, right here in our state. These are families, like ours, who grieve, and are forced to endure the trauma of not bringing a baby home. Further, we deal with the mental stress of not knowing what happened and why it happened. I have also learned that forty percent of these stillbirths are preventable according to the National Institute of Health's 2023 report, adding to the stress of our loss.

In 2024, Jennifer discovered that Ohio was not included in the registry connected with the Federal Act recognizing September 19<sup>th</sup> as National Stillbirth Prevention Day, passed by Congress in 2022. I then sought the help of former Senator Stephanie Kunzie and State Representative Adam Holmes, brought this to their attention, and asked them to help make this happen in Ohio. As we introduced this bill, we did so for the purpose of raising awareness of the numbers of families suffering from the loss of a child due to stillbirth. This bill in part could help promote greater opportunities for research as to why so many stillbirths are happening. And having this knowledge can produce the possibility of seeing a

diminish in stillbirths by establishing preventative measures, educating mothers, and providing them with proper medical resources. This bill also gives us a greater voice to work together in developing evidence-based solutions. Solutions we seek through collaborating our efforts with other organizations, hospitals, and the entire perinatal community who are all striving to improve prenatal care.

In the past two years, I have listened to story after story from mothers who have lost their angel babies. To hear their heart-wrenching stories, and see their agony, it is more incumbent for us to work even more diligently to help other families not feel the sting of loss. For our family, losing Miles still affects us. My wife still feels it. Gerald, Miles' father, still feels it. My oldest daughter, her husband and sons, and Jennifer's other two children, Noah and Harper still feel it. But we are not alone. It also affected our extended families, our friends, our church family, and much of our community in Zanesville. And then there is the larger community of loss. Other families that extend from Cleveland to Cincinnati, from Toledo to Marietta, and throughout the rest of Ohio. And through our work, we've met other women and families across the United States who share the pain of losing a child to stillbirth. But then we discovered that stillbirth is more than a mother's loss or attached to a specific group. Stillbirth is communal, extending to every race of people, nationality, culture, and religion. Stillbirth hits hard and it doesn't play favorites. It creates pain and trauma that is unparalleled. And the grief caused by stillbirth doesn't cease. It is why the work to prevent others from experiencing stillbirth is a vital part of what we are doing at Miles' Mission.

So, I am here today, to ask you to do what needs to be done to pass House Bill 4. We feel it is of the utmost importance for us to do the very best that we can to help more mothers experience successful births. The more successes we hear of positive birth experiences, the less stories we will hear of mothers and families in pain from child loss.

House Bill 4 is a major step in the right direction in helping other families avoid experiencing one of the most painful and challenging tragedies any of us can ever experience, and that is the loss of a child.

Thank you hearing me and God bless!