

**Public Party Testimony on House Bill 96
by Dàna M. Langford, Co-Founder & CEO of Village of Healing,
before the Ohio Senate Health Committee on 5/13/25**

Chair Huffman, Vice Chair Johnson, Ranking Member Liston, and members of the Senate Health Committee, thank you for the opportunity to testify today.

My name is Dàna Langford, and I am Co-Founder and CEO of Village of Healing – a Cleveland-based community healthcare organization focused on eliminating social determinants of health and improving patient outcomes throughout the Northeast Ohio region. I am here today to respectfully ask for your support for funding in the amount of \$800,000 through the State Operating Budget to expand equitable access to our critical services.

In 2020, The Institute for Women’s Policy Research published a report identifying Cleveland as the fifth worst city for Black women in the United States. Cleveland ranked last among cities with 100,000 or more women in terms of overall outcomes and educational achievement and second to last among cities concerning economic and health outcomes.

The Ohio Department of Health recently reported that 66% of pregnancy-related deaths in 2020 were preventable, with nearly half of deaths due to infection deemed avoidable. The leading contributors were inadequate risk assessment and lack of comprehensive postpartum care—exactly the gaps our model is designed to address.

Therefore, it is in response to these alarming health disparities that exist for women, children, and families in Cuyahoga County that Village of Healing was founded. The first and only of its kind in Ohio, Village of Healing is redefining healthcare by providing comprehensive maternal health services, primary care, mental health support, and community wellness programs designed by — and for — the communities we serve.

This patient-centered, interdisciplinary model fosters collaboration amongst providers including family nurse practitioners, women’s health nurse practitioners, certified nurse midwives, physicians for management beyond our scope, mental health specialists, and community health workers as a team. This includes regular case meetings, in-person consultations, and telehealth communication, ensuring continuity of care.

For example, by scheduling mothers and babies together for appointments throughout the baby’s first year and the mother’s full postpartum year, we are able to proactively screen for cardiovascular disease and mental health risks—the top causes of maternal mortality in the first 12 months after birth. This model places mothers and their babies at the center of care, improving follow-up rates, treatment compliance, and overall health outcomes which, in turn, reduces long-term healthcare costs for the State, insurers, and taxpayers.

In the last fiscal year, 95% of the pregnant women we cared for reached term delivery (37+ weeks)—a crucial milestone that reduces complications like NICU admissions, breathing difficulties, and feeding issues while increasing workforce stability and economic productivity.

Our family nurse practitioner has also achieved a 98% control rate for diabetic patients, keeping their HgbA1c below 7%. This dramatically lowers the risk of heart disease, kidney failure, amputations, and blindness—conditions that contribute to billions of dollars in healthcare costs nationwide. By preventing severe diabetes complications, we reduce hospitalizations, emergency room visits, and long-term disability.

We have been grateful for previous funding from the State of Ohio, including grants from the Governor's Office and the Ohio Department of Medicaid which have allowed us to:

- Recruit and retain highly qualified healthcare professionals, despite competition from large hospital systems.
- Develop easy-to-understand educational materials on chronic disease management, maternal health, and mental wellness, empowering patients to take charge of their health.
- Address transportation barriers by providing travel vouchers, ensuring patients can attend critical appointments and reducing missed visits that often lead to costly hospitalizations.
- Invest in professional development to keep our providers at the forefront of best practices in maternal and infant care.
- Implement Apricot CRM, a comprehensive case management system that enhances care coordination, tracks patient outcomes, and strengthens reporting for funding accountability.

Village of Healing has demonstrated a strong commitment to sustainability and partnership, securing funding from other esteemed organizations as well including the Cleveland Foundation, Gund Foundation, Glick Family Foundation, and Saint Luke's Foundation. Nationally, we have been supported by Goldman Sachs and the Maternal Mental Health Equity Fund. These investments underscore the confidence that public and private partners have in our ability to drive meaningful change.

Despite our success, the need for Village of Healing's services is greater than ever. Mothers in Ohio continue to experience heightened maternal mortality rates, chronic disease disproportionately impacts our communities, and mental health needs are rapidly growing. Without state investment, these gaps will continue to widen — costing lives and increasing long-term healthcare costs for all Ohioans.

And while we have successfully sustained our operations serving over 1,800 patients since opening our doors in 2022 through a combination of grants, patient reimbursements, and private donations, our growing patient base has tripled annually. Therefore, in order to continue to provide these critical services to the community at the rate we are experiencing, we must:

- Expand our clinical team to accommodate increasing patient volume at both our original and recently opened second location.
- Continue to offer competitive salaries to attract and retain top-tier healthcare professionals.
- Purchase essential medical and IT equipment, including exam tables, lifesaving devices, computers, and printers to support efficient patient care and data management.
- Strengthen outreach efforts, particularly in Youngstown, where we are expanding services to address maternal health outcomes in a new community.

Village of Healing has built a proven, effective model that is saving lives and improving health outcomes for Ohio's mothers and babies. With this investment from the State, we will be able to expand access to this lifesaving care, enhance economic stability for families, and reduce long-term healthcare costs across Ohio.

Thank you again for the opportunity to be here today as we continue our mission to ensure that every mother and baby in Ohio has the opportunity not just to survive—but to thrive.

I am happy to answer any questions you may have at this time.