

Testimony for Jill Miller, President & CEO, bi3
Ohio Senate Health Committee Testimony
Tuesday, May 13, 2025

Good morning, Chair Huffman, Vice Chair Johnson, Ranking Member Liston, and members of the committee. Thank you for your service to our state and for your work to improve the health and well-being of all Ohioans. I appreciate the opportunity to join you today.

My name is Jill Miller, and I serve as President and CEO of the bi3 Fund, a philanthropic initiative dedicated to fueling health innovation and reducing health disparities in Greater Cincinnati and beyond.

At bi3, we have invested more than \$100 million to improve health outcomes — including over \$20 million focused specifically on maternal, infant, and young child health. We make these investments because we believe every child deserves a healthy start, and because investing early yields benefits that extend across families, communities, and generations.

Today, I respectfully urge you to restore critical investments in evidence-based home visiting, infant vitality programming, expanded doula services, and continuous Medicaid eligibility for our youngest children. These are proven strategies that save lives, strengthen families, and reduce long-term costs to Ohio's health and social service systems.

We know this works — because we have seen it work.

We have seen our investments lead to statistically significant improvements in health. In 2011, Hamilton County had the second highest infant mortality rate in the nation relative to counties are size. Today, Hamilton County's overall infant mortality rate is 5.5 deaths per 1,000 live births — falling below the national average for the first time ever. The Black infant mortality rate reached single digits for the first time in our county's history.

We are also seeing encouraging signs across Ohio. The state's overall infant mortality rate has reached its lowest point in more than two decades. This progress reflects the power of sustained, evidence-based investment — and it reinforces why now is the time to double down on what works, not walk away from it.

This momentum is real — and it is fragile. Without sustained investment, these hard-won gains will be lost.

Governor DeWine's executive budget proposal rightly prioritized expanding evidence-based home visiting, growing community-led infant vitality efforts, ensuring access to doula services, and protecting continuous health coverage for young children. Each of these strategies addresses a critical piece of the maternal and infant health crisis in Ohio.

Home visiting programs like Family Connects provide every new family with clinical support during the earliest and most vulnerable days of life. They have been proven to reduce emergency room visits, lower maternal anxiety and depression, strengthen parent-child relationships, and deliver a strong return on investment for communities. Locally developed infant vitality initiatives — like Cradle Cincinnati — show that when we listen to mothers, empower community leadership, and build culturally responsive care models, we can save lives and close persistent racial disparities.

Expanding access to doula services ensures that more women, especially in maternity care deserts, have trusted advocates during pregnancy, labor, and postpartum recovery. Doula care is associated with better birth outcomes, fewer medical interventions, and improved maternal mental health.

Continuous Medicaid eligibility from birth through age three ensures that young children do not lose access to vital health services during the most critical years of brain development. Stable health coverage helps catch developmental issues early, ensures timely immunizations and well-child visits, and strengthens long-term health trajectories.

These are investments that honor life, strengthen families, and secure a healthier, more prosperous future for Ohio.

At bi3, we are committed to working alongside state leaders to continue advancing these evidence-based solutions. We believe that when Ohio invests early and invests wisely, we can move from persistently poor maternal and infant health rankings to national leadership.

Please prioritize the following amendments to fully restore these essential investments. Let's ensure that every baby born in Ohio has the healthiest possible start — and that every family has the support they need to thrive.

SC0457 (Health): Reverse the House's repeal of continuous Medicaid coverage for eligible children (birth–age 3)

SC0458 (Health): Restore the as-Introduced investments in Help Me Grow and Infant Vitality

SC0461 (Health): Remove the restriction limiting Medicaid reimbursement for doulas to just six counties

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