



Senate Finance Committee | June 7, 2017  
Statement by Allyson Blandford  
Director Advocacy & Government Affairs | March of Dimes

Thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony on House Bill 49 as it relates to infant mortality research.

The March of Dimes is a national voluntary health agency whose volunteers and staff work to improve the health of infants and children by preventing birth defects, premature births and infant mortality. Founded in 1938, the March of Dimes funds programs of research, community services, education and advocacy.

Governor Kasich has made infant mortality a priority and has included a \$1 million appropriation in the budget for researching infant mortality through the Department of Higher Education. Our amendment seeks up to \$500,000 of those funds for our Prematurity Research Center Ohio Collaborative.

In 2015, the Ohio Department of Health reported an infant mortality rate of 7.2 deaths per 1,000 live births. Prematurity is the leading cause of infant mortality. Each year, the March of Dimes issues a report card for each state determining its level of preterm birth rates. Ohio earned a “C” grade due to its preterm birth rate of 10.3%.

In order to address this, the March of Dimes has made significant investments in funding research of the causes of prematurity. In 2013, the March of Dimes joined Ohio’s leading universities and hospitals to launch a Prematurity Research Center aimed exclusively at finding the unknown causes of preterm birth. We joined with physicians, obstetricians, pediatricians, reproductive scientists and others not traditionally engaged in prematurity research including scientists specializing in genomics, bioinformatics, and engineering all with the goal of finding causes of prematurity.

Our Ohio partners include Cincinnati Children’s Hospital, University Hospitals MacDonald Women’s Hospital, Mount Carmel, University of Cincinnati, Case Western Reserve University, MetroHealth, Nationwide Children’s Hospital, The Ohio State University Wexner Medical Center, and Rainbow Babies & Children’s Hospital.

Current studies include:

- Researching prevention and treatment of heart defects (Cincinnati Children’s Hospital)
- Researching paternal epigenetic inheritance in embryonic development and birth defects (Cincinnati Children’s Hospital)
- Research to develop treatments for premature deliveries due to premature rupture of embryonic sac (MetroHealth Medical Center)
- Researching the female Somali population in Ohio who have shown low preterm birth rates as compared to African Americans (Across all Ohio Collaborative partners)

If awarded, March of Dimes would continue to fund research within the state of Ohio with the goal of developing treatment interventions. Thank you for your consideration of our support.