

October 28, 2021

Chairwoman Manchester, Vice Chair Cutrona, Ranking Member Liston, and members of the Ohio House Families, Aging and Human Services Committee, thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony in support of House Bill 142.

UC Health is an integrated academic health system serving the Greater Cincinnati region. In partnership with the University of Cincinnati, UC Health combines clinical expertise and compassion with research and teaching – offering patients options for even the most complex situations.

Infant and maternal mortality is a public health crisis both nationally and most tragically, for Hamilton County. Black women are 2-3 times more likely to die as a result of a pregnancy associated death or to have their child die in her/his first year of life. Social support and advocacy have emerged as both desired and needed interventions to eliminate this disparity. The community arm of Cradle Cincinnati, Queen's Village, has identified doulas as an intervention to provide what Black women believe they need to obtain equitable outcomes.

UC Health has transformed prenatal care for the women in our community by integrating community health workers, case managers, tobacco treatment specialists, and social workers into our clinical care teams. We welcome the added expertise of doulas as we continue to listen and respond to the voice of Black women.

House Bill 142 will greatly assist UC Health serve our patients by making several reforms to Ohio's nursing chapter and establishing a doula Medicaid pilot program. This legislation would codify the definition of doula and only permit individuals to claim the title of doula if they have been recognized by the Ohio Board of Nursing. This provision of HB 142 will ensure expecting mothers are able to locate and utilize highly qualified health care professionals who can provide doula services during the antepartum, intrapartum and postpartum periods of pregnancy.

This legislation provides two pathways for individuals to earn a certificate by the Ohio Board of Nursing. The first option for doula certification is for an individual to be certified by a doula certification organization that is recognized at an international, national, state or local level. If an individual is not recognized by one of these organizations, the Board of Nursing is empowered to establish education and experience requirements through the rulemaking process for an individual to obtain a doula certificate. These multiple avenues increase doula access to mothers and also ensures Ohio doulas possess the necessary skills to provide quality care to patients.

In addition to establishing a certification process for doulas, House Bill 142 also creates a four year pilot program where Medicaid beneficiaries will have access to doula care. Under this pilot program, doula reimbursement will be tied to outcome measurements. House Bill 142 instructs the Department of Medicaid to publish an annual report to illustrate the health outcomes and fiscal impact of this pilot program. The final report will include a recommendation from the director

regarding a re-authorization of the pilot program, and this report will be presented to the Joint Medicaid Oversight Committee in the state legislature for consideration.

UC Health greatly appreciates Representative Brinkman's leadership on this issue, and we strongly support House Bill 142.

Thank you again for the opportunity to testify in support of this legislation. Please contact us at any time if we can provide any further information.

Sincerely,



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