

**Ohio Senate
Health Committee
House Bill 110
Rebecca Starner
Homes County General Health District
5/13/21**

Chairman Huffman, Vice Chair Antani, Ranking Member Antonio and members of the committee, my name is Becky Starner, and I am the Personal Health Services Director for Holmes County General Health district as well as the program manager for Help Me Grow in the county. Thank you for the opportunity to provide written testimony expressing my support for increasing the state investment in Help Me Grow, Ohio's evidence-based home visiting program in House Bill 110.

Our program supports healthy pregnancies and healthy birth outcomes which in turn supports children getting a healthy start in life. Kids who start behind often stay behind – first in school, then on the job and in life. Ohio is facing a workforce crisis because kids are not ready for school. In fact, only 41% of Ohio children come to kindergarten ready to learn. With increased financial support to Home Visiting Services, we can offer more children and their families support. Children who participated in Home Visiting scored 25% higher on first through third grade reading and math achievement tests than their peers who did not participate in Home Visiting.

As it stands now, the Ohio Department of Health has increased the Help Me Grow investment over the biennium by a total of \$1.9 million. The increase in funding will allow for 500 additional families to receive home visiting services in the upcoming biennium. We are asking for an additional \$1.9 million which will allow the program to serve 1,000 additional children during the upcoming biennium.

Now is the time for us to double down on our commitment to Ohio's youngest and most vulnerable children, as well as the families who support them. The Ohio General Assembly has the opportunity to help improve outcomes for both mom and baby through expanding Home Visiting services. Now is the time to lean into the goal of tripling the number of families served by evidence-based home visiting. This will require the maintenance of the historic investment seen during the last biennium and additional state investment to support growth and the leveraging of additional federal resources.

Thank you for the opportunity to submit written testimony today and please do not hesitate to reach out to me directly if you have any questions.

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