

Ohio Senate Health Committee

15 September 2021

Lisbeth McCulfor, RN BSN

PO Box 360502

Columbus, OH 43236

RE: Senate Bill 151

Chairman Huffman, Senator Antonio, Senator Johnson, and committee members: Good morning. My name is Lisbeth McCulfor, and I am a registered nurse. My address is PO Box 360502, Columbus, OH 43236. Thank you for this opportunity to speak.

I worked in a Level III Neonatal Intensive Care Unit for a year in Fort Wayne, Indiana. I absolutely loved caring for infants in the NICU, and my original intent was to continue in that field. However, the reason I chose that field was my concern and love for babies and mothers, and that is exactly why I now find myself working full-time at an organization that advocates for babies whose lives are not respected by many in the medical community. I am currently the Executive Assistant at Created Equal, an educational bioethics non-profit based here in Columbus and dedicated to protecting the lives and dignity of preborn babies.

I'm sure you are already somewhat familiar with the tragic story from 2017 of the Finnefrock family and their premature twins, Emery and Elliot. Born at 22 weeks and 5 days gestation, the twins were denied any assessment and medical care despite their mother's pleas for help and their clear signs of life: moving, breathing, and crying. In fact, the hospital had previously told their mother that they would not provide care for babies born prior to 22 weeks and 5 days gestation. Despite the twins being born at this very point, the hospital went back on their word and refused to send a NICU team to even assess the infants.

After this heart-breaking experience, their mother, Amanda, called us because she needed help and no one else would answer her calls. Created Equal shares Amanda's concern for honoring these babies' lives by ensuring other preemies get the care they and their parents deserve.

As a nurse who has cared for premature babies, I know very well that saving the life of a preemie is not always possible. However, what *is* possible is to treat premature babies—and their families—with dignity and respect that reflects their value as human beings. I am advocating for the passage of this bill to ensure that premature babies receive the same standard of care as any other individual in need of treatment at a hospital.

Lines 65 through 71 of this bill are particularly important, as they put the power for determining an infant's treatment back in the hands of the infant's parents. Furthermore, lines 72 through 78 empower parents to obtain a second opinion, even from a different hospital. Although I would trust the vast majority of neonatologists to be knowledgeable and proficient doctors, no parent should have to rely solely on the medical advice of one doctor—or even one team of neonatologists—when their child's life hangs in the balance.

As a nurse and an advocate for both preborn and born babies, I wholeheartedly support the passage of Senate Bill 151 to ensure appropriate care is provided to preemies and their parents, and to enable the parents to take action when their child's care has been compromised. Thank you.