



**State Senator Nickie J. Antonio**  
**District 23**

Senate Health Committee

June 1, 2022

Sponsor Testimony SB 190

Good morning Chair Huffman, Vice Chair Antani and members of the Senate Health Committee. Thank you for this opportunity to provide sponsor testimony to designate the week of March 22<sup>nd</sup> as ‘Ohio Doula Week’.

This week of recognition is an important step in reaffirming our commitment to healthy families and combatting the maternal and infant mortality crisis in Ohio. Doulas are trained professionals who provide continuous physical, emotional and informational support to a mother before, during and shortly after childbirth. They work to reduce the stress levels and uncertainty that comes along with pregnancy. This can significantly impact the health of an expectant parent and their baby. According to the Ohio Department of Health, from 2008 to 2017, there were 731 pregnancy-associated deaths in Ohio<sup>1</sup>. 59% of pregnancy-related deaths were deemed preventable.

According to a 2016 study, women who receive doula care have a 22 percent lower chance of having a preterm birth<sup>2</sup>. In Ohio, the preterm birth rate among Black women is 48 percent higher than the rate among all other women, according to research by the Ohio March of Dimes<sup>3</sup>. Furthermore, studies show that mothers in historically marginalized and underserved communities who use a doula have better birth outcomes<sup>4</sup>. Doula care is among the most promising approaches to mitigating disparities in maternal health by providing individualized, culturally appropriate and patient-centered emotional support and advocacy.

Ohio Doula Week will help educate the public about the critical role doulas and doula care play in increasing maternal health outcomes. Furthermore, recognition of doulas and doula care continues the conversation regarding racial disparities in maternal health in Ohio.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify on this legislation. I am happy to answer any questions the committee may have at this time.

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<sup>1</sup> <https://odh.ohio.gov/know-our-programs/pregnancy-associated-mortality-review/reports#:~:text=The%20Ohio%20pregnancy%2Drelated%20mortality,deaths%20per%20100%2C000%20live%20births.>

<sup>2</sup> Kozhimannil, K. B., Hardeman, R. R., Alarid-Escudero, F., Vogelsang, C. A., Blauer-Peterson, C., & Howell, E. A. (2016). Modeling the cost-effectiveness of doula care associated with reductions in preterm birth and cesarean delivery. *Birth*, 43 (1), 20-27.

<sup>3</sup> National Center for Health Statistics, final natality data Retrieved April 26, 2021, from [www.marchofdimes.org/peristats](http://www.marchofdimes.org/peristats)

<sup>4</sup> Gruber, Kenneth J, et al. “Impact of Doulas on Healthy Birth Outcomes.” *The Journal of Perinatal Education*, Springer Publishing Company, 2013, <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC3647727/>.