



Testimony of
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Proponent Testimony on House Bill 302
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Ohio House Health Committee

Good Morning Chairman Huffman, Vice Chair Gavarone, Ranking Member Antonio, and members of the House Health Committee, thank you for allowing me to testify in support of House Bill 302.

I am a Pediatrician and Founder of an Ohio State University program called Moms2B. I thank Representatives Boggs and Antonio for introducing this much needed legislation.

As a way to address the multitude of factors that affect infant mortality and to help reduce disparities in infant mortality, I helped create the Moms2B program in 2010. Moms2B is a weekly community educational group program for pregnant women living in poverty. We address the social determinants of health and connect pregnant women to needed medical care, social services, education and jobs. We assist families until the infant reaches his or her first birthday.

Moms2B is a multidisciplinary program with a team of healthcare professionals participating, including physicians, family advocates, community health advisers, dietitians, certified lactation counselors, nurses and midwives. The sites are also service learning opportunities for health professions students as well as allied medical professional students, social work interns, and many volunteers.

During the last year, our program has expanded and we are now in eight high risk neighborhoods in Columbus. We served more than 600 pregnant and postpartum women in 2017, as well as their children and the fathers of the babies. Our moms welcomed 161 babies last year.

We serve moms of all ages, from 12 to 47 years old. Our moms have various needs and support systems available to them. Unfortunately, as Representatives Boggs and Antonio have recognized with this bill, not all teen moms have family support they need during this critical time for them and their babies. We have witnessed first-hand the challenges some of our young moms face accessing needed pre-natal care.

I would like to share with you a few examples:

- The mother of one of our teen moms would not sign off on prenatal care, so she was not able to receive care at all. In this case, Franklin County Children's Services would not step in. Thankfully, her custody eventually was switched to her grandmother, allowing her to receive care, but it was later in her pregnancy. She is one of the statistics, "entered prenatal care late."
- Another teen mom was in labor at the hospital. She was unable to get care without her mom's consent, until it presented as an emergency. We could not reach our teen's mom. Our Moms2B program director was about to drive to her house to get mom on the phone. We were eventually able to reach her, but our teen mom was stuck at intake until this happened.
- A 17 year old mom and the baby's father have been to Moms2B sessions at our Hilltop location several times, and the 17 year old mom cannot find her mother to sign the necessary consent for care. In addition to signing our consent, she is interested in stopping smoking and needs an additional signature for consent to enroll in a smoking cessation program. The cessation program is a part of Columbus Public Health, and this mom will get diapers for the baby's first year if she keeps clean.

Every day in Moms2B I see how social factors affect maternal health. Our Moms have incredible resilience, but the social stresses, including lack of stable housing, poor food, domestic stress, and unsafe neighborhoods, affect their physical health. They have more hypertension, more anemia, more asthma and depression. We work to address these medical and social factors that contribute to the high infant death rates we see in impoverished communities.

The teen moms we serve should not have to face the added stress of lack of prenatal care if they do not have a parent or guardian approval. Access to physical and mental health care is critical for our moms and their babies.

Thank you for allowing me to present my views and strong support for House Bill 302 to ensure all expecting moms have access to needed prenatal health care, and the needed care after they deliver.

This will allow us to continue to welcome more healthy babies in our state. I am happy to answer any questions you may have.