



Representative Emilia Strong Sykes
34th Ohio House District

Chairman Huffman, Vice-Chair Gavarone, Ranking Member Antonio and members of the House Health Committee, thank you for the opportunity to present sponsor testimony on House Bill 505.

House Bill 505 will designate the month of May as Maternal Mortality Awareness Month in Ohio. Ohio has the opportunity to be a leader in maternal mortality awareness. By designating a month for awareness, we will bring light to the various causes of maternal mortality, develop new ideas and protocols to limit and eliminate pregnancy related death, and show the women of Ohio that the state supports their health and well-being during and after pregnancy.

A pregnancy-associated death is defined as the death of a woman while pregnant or anytime within one year of pregnancy regardless of cause.

Committees:

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The number of Ohio mothers who die from pregnancy related complications has increased threefold from a decade ago. The Ohio Department of Health reported more than 400 pregnancy related deaths in Ohio between 2008 and 2014.

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) defines maternal mortality as, “a pregnancy related death, meaning the death of a woman while pregnant or within 1 year of the end of a pregnancy, regardless of the outcome, duration or site of the pregnancy- from any cause related to or aggravated by the pregnancy or its management, but from accidental or incidental causes.”

Vital statistics on pregnancy related deaths have been collected since the late 1980s and despite advances in medical information and technology, there has been a dramatic increase in maternal mortality in Ohio, and the United States, with an increase of more than double the rate of 7.2 per 100,000 live births in 1987 to 17.2 per 100,000 live births in 2011. In 2010, the Ohio Department of Health began collecting more specific information on maternal deaths through the Pregnancy-Associated Mortality Review (PAMR) to ensure that maternal deaths are identified and initiatives are developed to prevent future maternal deaths. According to the PAMR, maternal mortality is most frequently caused by injury, followed by chronic disease, cardiovascular conditions, and infections. Furthermore, maternal mortality shares a sad and startling similarity to infant mortality where the rate of maternal mortality for black women is at least twice the rate it

is for white women. This follows the logic that you cannot have healthy babies, without health women.

May is a befitting month, because it is a time spent celebrating the mothers in our lives. Women whose death was caused by pregnancy would otherwise be celebrating their motherhood as well. We must not forget the women who have died due to their pregnancy and make changes to lower Ohio's maternal mortality rate.

I hope you will join me in creating maternal mortality awareness month in Ohio and ensure that all mothers are able to celebrate their motherhood in May. I would happy to answer any questions.

