



Allie Frazier

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Proponent Testimony on House Bill 496

House Families, Aging, and Human Services Committee

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Chair Manchester, Vice Chair Cutrona, Ranking Member Denson, and members of the committee, thank you for allowing me to testify today on behalf of House Bill 496. My name is Allie Frazier, and I am the Executive Director of Right to Life of Northeast Ohio. Right to Life of Northeast Ohio is a pro-life organization which seeks to protect innocent human life from conception to natural death, through human rights advocacy and community action on issues such as abortion, euthanasia and assisted suicide.

H.B. 496 is an important bill which, if passed, will license the practice of midwifery in the State of Ohio. Many of the technical aspects of this bill have already been covered by previous testimony, therefore, I would like to take a few moments to go over why this bill is important specifically for protecting life in communities across Ohio.

Ohio's infant mortality rates, especially in our own communities located in Summit and Portage counties, have long been a key focus of Right to Life of Northeast Ohio's advocacy. I am sure that this legislature is already aware of Ohio's dismal infant mortality statistics, however,

they may be less aware of Ohio's maternal mortality rate, a topic which is equally worth discussing. Although Ohio is below the national average when it comes to maternal mortality—Ohio's maternal mortality rate is 14.7% per 100,000 deaths as opposed to the national average of 17.4% per 100,000 deaths— every life lost to maternal mortality is tragic and wholly worth our preventative efforts.

Focused, community-based solutions like the services that midwives provide are vital in avoiding these preventable deaths. A global study found if the coverage of midwife delivered interventions were profoundly increased, 41% of maternal deaths could be averted. Midwives, quite literally, save lives. In moving to license midwives, the state of Ohio can add more tools to their tool belts and increase their ability to serve moms and babies.

This bill empowers and expands the purview of midwives, so they can provide more continuity of care to their patients. Additionally, the strengthened requirements for midwives in H.B. 496 provide protections for their work and underline the critical nature of the service they offer to their communities. In the fight against maternal mortality, licensing midwives is a tangible and balanced action with life-saving results. If we as a state are serious about addressing maternal mortality, we must also be serious in our efforts to support and safeguard the work of midwives. This bill represents an exceptional first step.

I urge you to vote yes on House Bill 496. Thank you and I'm happy to answer any questions.