



Office of
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House Bill 190 Proponent Testimony (As prepared)
House Public Health Policy Committee

Chairman Lipps, Vice-Chair Stewart, Ranking Member Liston, and members of the House Public Health Policy Committee, thank you for the opportunity to provide proponent testimony on House Bill 190, sponsored by Representatives Brent and White, which will designate the week of April 11th to April 17th, as 'Black Maternal Health Week'. I am Franklin County Commissioner Erica Crawley and I bring you greetings on behalf of the Board of Commissioners where I serve with my colleagues, President John O'Grady and Commissioner Kevin Boyce.

I am here to express my enthusiastic support for the House Bill 190. This initiative is a vital step towards recognizing and addressing the significant disparities in maternal health outcomes within the Black community, and it signifies our commitment to improving the lives of Black mothers and their children. Black Maternal Health Week is not only an opportunity to raise awareness about the unique challenges Black mothers face but also a time to shed light on the systemic and structural issues that contribute to these disparities. By officially recognizing this week, we demonstrate our dedication to dismantling these obstacles and implementing policies that prioritize the well-being of Black mothers.

Black women experience higher rates of poor birth outcomes, including higher rates of Cesarean, preterm birth, low birth weight, and infant death. Studies show that significant racial disparities in birth outcomes continue to exist even after accounting for factors like the pregnant person's income, education, marital status, tobacco/ alcohol use, and insurance coverage. In other words, health and social factors alone can't explain the higher rates of poor birth outcomes among Black people. Then what does explain the health inequity? Researchers have proposed that African Americans are subjected to individual, institutional, and other forms of discrimination throughout their lives; these experiences build on each other and are uniquely stressful, and the increased stress can negatively impact pregnancy outcomes.¹

In 2019, the Ohio Department of Health reported that in Ohio, from 2008-2016, non-Hispanic Black women were more than 2.5 times as likely to die from pregnancy-related causes, than non-Hispanic White women.² ODH's Pregnancy-Associated Mortality Review's (PAMR) findings from 2017-2018, revealed that embolisms (18%), pre-eclampsia and eclampsia (18%), infections (18%), and cardiovascular and coronary conditions (18%) were the leading causes of pregnancy-related deaths among non-Hispanic Black women and 73% of deaths to non-Hispanic Black women were deemed preventable.³ Knowing this information and having the

¹ Dekker, R. (2019, August 12). Evidence on: Doulas.

² A Report on Pregnancy-Associated Deaths in Ohio 2008-2016. Ohio Department of Health

³ A Report on Pregnancy-Associated Deaths in Ohio 2017-2018. Ohio Department of Health

data should help inform the decisions we make as elected officials and as we say in Franklin County, to serve Every Resident Every Day.

During my time in the legislature, I sponsored and helped champion several pieces of legislation that have had or will have a significant impact on the health of birthing people and their families. This includes extending Medicaid postpartum coverage from 60 days to 12 months after giving birth (HB110). Fought for an amendment in the State's operating budget (HB166), which codified the Pregnancy Associated Mortality Review Board (PAMR) and required a report every two years. Save our Mothers Act (HB42) which if re-introduced would require patient safety bundles for the two leading causes of maternal deaths and continuing education requirements for doctors and nurses. Finally, Medicaid Reimbursement for Doula (HB142), which would allow women to have access to social and emotional supports during and after pregnancy that contribute to better birth outcomes.

Black Maternal Health Week is an opportunity to highlight the progress made in Ohio to save lives and reduce racial disparities in birth outcomes like those mentioned above. The designation of Black Maternal Health Week is a significant step towards bringing awareness and address urgent policy needs of Black mothers and ending racial disparities in maternal health outcomes. I urge you to support this bill and work towards its swift passage. Every family deserves to bring a child into this world, safely, with competent and attentive care, and without fear. Thank you for your time and consideration of this bill.

Yours in Service,

Erica C. Crawley