

Village of Healing to The State of Ohio Senate Finance Committee, May 25, 2023

Dear Esteemed Members of the Senate Finance Committee:

Governor DeWine is known throughout our great state and across our country as a staunch advocate for children and families. In words and action, our governor stands up and stands behind initiatives that 1) keep children healthy; 2) promote fatherhood and strong families; 3) and protect the lives of the unborn.

Those priorities are embedded in our state operating budget. Funding for these priorities enables the Ohio Department of Health, the Ohio Commission on Minority Health, and the Governor's Office of State and Faith-Based Initiatives to create a healthier Ohio. For all Ohioans.

This year, **HB33** will support the governor's priorities—and your priorities—to keep Ohio families healthy. This year, **I ask your support for Ohio's families** who face challenges in becoming their healthiest selves.

As you know, good health begins before we are born. Good health starts with prenatal care. It is care that promotes good nutrition and access to high-quality healthcare. Access means that care is affordable. It is close to home. It considers the needs of the whole family. A team-based approach to care means that every family member's needs are met. Care considers the barriers a family may face, and helps families navigate those barriers.

Too many Ohio families face the unthinkable: a lost pregnancy. A child who doesn't celebrate a first birthday. High-quality prenatal care improves birth outcomes, especially full-term deliveries, which give infants their best chance for good health in their first year. In Cuyahoga County, where I live, and where my organization, Village of Healing, is located, we are working to reduce a 50-year track record of infant mortality, especially with Black infants who are 4x times more likely to die in their first year.

Village of Healing uses an evidence-informed solution that promises to end our infant mortality crisis. Our team-based approach to prenatal care helped 95% of mothers deliver healthy babies at full-term. That's a new high watermark in our county where our county's leaders set an improvement goal of 90%.

In 2022, Village of Healing's counselors helped end stigma around mental health, one of the number one postpartum complications. 75% of mothers said they developed coping skills and reduced anxiety and depression after three months. Healthy moms are the cornerstone of healthy families—and we must do more to support them.

Next, with your support, Village of Healing will introduce yet another evidence-based approach to caring for families. Our postpartum/pediatric model, piloted in Cuyahoga County, and scaled statewide, promises to 1) reduce medical costs; 2) save families' time; 3) increase access to preventative care; and 4) help mothers and babies achieve their best possible health outcomes. How? We will offer same-day, single visit, coordinated care. A midwife and a family nurse practitioner will see families during the same appointment. No more separate, siloed visits. Our model was piloted by Johns Hopkins School of Medicine with women who have private insurance and use Medicaid. We will pilot this study here in Ohio. We will use our results to show how Ohio can lead the way as the best place for healthy families.

We need your support. We can do this together. **Please amend HB33, Section 307.80 (TANF) to support Village of Healing with \$750,000** to pilot our postpartum/pediatric model starting in January 2024. We will deliver. We will show you our results. We will work with the Ohio Department of Health, an agency that has awarded us grant funds in 2022-2023 and knows what we can do. Let's make 2024 the year that makes high-quality prenatal, postpartum, and infant health our top priority. Families are Ohio's strength.