



**Ohio House of Representatives
Public Health Policy Committee – RE: HB-190**

**Cuyahoga County Office of Early Childhood Written Testimony
Submitted 10-31-23**

Chairman Lipps, Ranking Member Liston and members of the House Public Health Policy Committee, thank you for your time and attention considering the following brief testimony submitted in support of designating April 11 to April 17, Black Maternal Health Week.

We are Invest in Children, Cuyahoga County's public/private partnership to mobilize resources and research to ensure the well-being of all young children in Cuyahoga County. We are both a funder and partner in programs that help pregnant Black women and their infants thrive. Supporting the health of Black women--physical and mental -- is a key piece of the work to prevent health and learning disparities among young children. We have been engaged in this work for 25 years.

While there have been some hard-won reductions in Black infant mortality in the past few years, there are still huge disparities between mortality and morbidity rates for both black women and their infants, and their white counterparts. In Cuyahoga County, a Black baby is still three times more likely to die before their first birthday as a white baby, and that baby's mother is at substantially higher risk of dying during pregnancy or within one year of delivery.

Many of the persistent disparities in the maternal experiences and birth outcomes of Black women in Ohio are rooted in social determinants of health. The solutions to these inequities are often less medical in nature than they are enabled by social changes in how Black women and their families fare in much broader social and economic areas. As such, effective work to improve outcomes for Black women and their babies requires a concerted and focused effort that recognizes and employs strategies outside of traditional health care delivery and public health work.

Therefore, we support designating April 11th to April 17th as Black Maternal Health Week -- to create a focused opportunity increase awareness, provide education, and build momentum around effective strategies to improve the entire maternal experience for Black women and their families.

Pease let us know now, or anytime, if you have questions or need of additional information.

FOLLOW UP CONTACT INFORMATION

Shawna Rohrman, Ph.D.
Director Invest in Children
shawna.rohrman@jfs.ohio.gov
216-698-7596

John Ladd, MNO
Program Officer Invest in Children
John.Ladd@jfs.ohio.gov
216-443-6583