



Jessica Warner

House Bill 297

House Ways and Means Committee

November 5, 2019

Chairman Merrin, Vice-chair LaRe, Ranking Member Rogers, and members of the committee, thank you for allowing me to testify today on HB 297. My name is Jessica Warner and I am the Director of Legislative Affairs for Ohio Right to Life. On behalf of Ohio Right to Life and our statewide membership and affiliates, I am here today to speak in support of the income tax credit for pregnancy center donations.

Pregnancy centers serve a vital purpose in our society. They offer free services and assistance to women and families in need throughout Ohio, providing pregnancy tests, ultrasounds, prenatal vitamins, STI tests, maternity and baby clothes, diapers, parenting classes, housing and utility assistance, referrals to community resources and more. In Ohio, we have over 160 pregnancy centers throughout all parts of the state serving tens of thousands of Ohioans. These centers and clinics ensure that when a woman finds out she is pregnant, she doesn't feel alone or that she doesn't have the resources. They work to empower her and provide her with hope by surrounding her with the help and support she needs.

This Legislature has already shown support for the work of pregnancy centers by increasing available federal TANF dollars through grants at the Department of Job and Family Services in this past budget cycle, for which the pro-life community is so grateful.



Most centers are almost entirely privately funded, however, with over 90% of their funding coming through local community donations. Incentivizing private funds, as this legislation does, could make a huge impact in expanding the reach of pregnancy centers across the state.

This bill would provide a nonrefundable tax credit equal to 50% of the taxpayer's donations, not to exceed the individual's tax liability. This will encourage more Ohioans to invest in their community where it the investment is needed most – in some of the most vulnerable children and families.

In our battle against the infant mortality crisis in Ohio, we know that early intervention is key. Ensuring that women are receiving prenatal care and education from the beginning of their pregnancies is one of the best ways to safeguard against many of the causes of infant mortality. Pregnancy centers like Elizabeth's New Life Center which is working to provide in-home prenatal visits, Heartbeat of Toledo which serves as a part of their local infant mortality prevention hub, and Women's Care Center whose two locations in Franklin County report that 1 in every 9 babies born in Franklin County begin their care at WCC, are prime examples of how these centers serve on the front line in our fight against infant mortality.

We are grateful for a Legislature and Governor who continue to put families first and truly invest in Ohio's women and children. On behalf of Ohio Right to Life, I respectfully ask that you support HB 297.