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March 30, 2023

Dear Members of the House Finance Committee,

Thank you for your diligent work to hear the voices of so many during this busy budget process. I am reaching out to ask for your support of Amendment HC0877 which would create a certification mechanism for doulas and require Medicaid to reimburse for doula services. We have worked across party lines and in both chambers of the legislature over the last four years for the inclusion of doula services in the list of Ohio's covered Medicaid benefits.

The involvement of doulas into the normal course of care before, during and after childbirth has proven to provide better birth outcomes for mothers and infants compared to those that are without. Doula assisted mothers are four times less likely to have a low-birth-weight baby, two times less likely to experience a birth complication involving themselves or their baby and significantly more likely to initiate breastfeeding.

Prior General Assemblies have vetted this policy. Senate Bill 328 (133rd General Assembly) passed the Senate with a vote of 32-1 in the fall of 2020 and House Bill 142 (134th General Assembly) passed the House with a vote of 82-3 in the summer of 2022 and nearly made it through the Senate before running out of time in lame duck last winter. Expanding access to doula services has bipartisan, bicameral support, as evidenced by its history and the commitment of current legislators to moving this policy forward. Amending this policy into the budget is a more streamlined process, since this policy has been fully vetted, and will more quickly mean that doulas can help more moms and babies survive and thrive.

We are happy to answer any questions you may have and ask for your support of HC0877.

Thank you,

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