

Patricia Todak
House Bill 49
House Finance Committee
April 26, 2017

Chairman Smith, Vice Chair Ryan, Ranking Member Cera, and members of the committee,

Thank you for allowing me to testify today on Substitute House Bill 49.

My name is Patricia Todak and I am with Heartbeat of Toledo, one of the 142 pregnancy resource centers located in Ohio. Heartbeat has two locations in Northwest Ohio as well as a mobile women's center. Heartbeat of Toledo has been in existence since 1971 and was where Heartbeat International began. Today Heartbeat International has 1,800 affiliate pregnancy centers on six continents.

Heartbeat has two locations in Toledo—one near the University of Toledo and the other in East Toledo. East Toledo has more single mother households than 98.7 percent of the United States and the per capita income of residents is lower than 98.1 percent of the neighborhoods in America.

In 2016, Heartbeat helped 1,600 women in their families. Our medical services are all free and include pregnancy tests, ultrasounds, options counseling, prenatal vitamins, and STD testing.

In addition to medical services, Heartbeat offers free prenatal and parenting classes and the opportunity for moms and dads to earn free baby items for each class completed. Emergency assistance is also available to help families in need.

Heartbeat of Toledo is part of the Northwest Ohio Pathways Hub. As part of this program, Heartbeat strives to reduce the incidence of infant mortality and low-birthweight births by helping pregnant women gain early access to health care. Through this program Heartbeat helps women to get health insurance, a physician, and access to numerous community resources including the Women Infant Children program, Help Me Grow, Job and Family Services, as well as counseling and housing services and much more.

During Heartbeat's last fiscal year, Heartbeat had 5,792 client visits and offered 1075 pregnancy tests and 1,349 ultrasounds. Every woman with a positive test is provided free prenatal vitamins.

Information on adoption is also provided. During the last 12 months, 10 women have pursued adoption. This is a significant increase over previous years.

In December of 2015, Heartbeat of Toledo was awarded funding as part of the Ohio Parenting and Pregnancy Program. With the help of OPP funding, we have been able to

help hundreds of women and their families. Since March of 2016, we have served 1,143 TANF-eligible clients who are pregnant or have a child under 12 months old.

In addition to offering free pregnancy tests, ultrasounds, and options counseling, Heartbeat offers 70 individual prenatal and parenting classes and three different group classes. The group classes have covered such topics as childbirth preparation, bonding with your baby, first-aid, and more. These group classes are in addition to one-on-one classes offered through Heartbeat's Earn While You Learn program. Parenting classes can continue into the toddler years as families strive to learn more parenting skills while earning much-needed baby items.

The Ohio Parenting and Pregnancy Program funding is set to end in July of this year. It is my hope that continued Ohio Parenting and Pregnancy funding will be made available in the Ohio budget so that Heartbeat and other pregnancy centers can continue to serve the thousands of women in need of their services.

Cara* is an example of a recent client who is benefiting from Heartbeat services.

She came in to Heartbeat just three weeks ago. A local hospital told her about our parenting services. After going through our parenting orientation, she began to share her story. She told us she came to our office after having a meal at a soup kitchen because she has no food in her home.

She said that she needs safe housing, she needs transportation, she needs food for herself, she needs supplies for the baby, and she needs someone to teach her how to take care of a baby.

Because Heartbeat exists and has become a source of support in our community she was referred to us for baby supplies. But when she left today she was given so much more. She was able to meet with our community health worker and get started with getting medical care, dental care, housing, transportation, food for herself and baby, and many other community resources to set her on the path to being successful in this new stage of life.

She still has a journey ahead of her, but now she also has Heartbeat; she left feeling excited about her next steps in preparing for her baby and knowing that she has a place to help with answers.

Thank you for giving me the opportunity to share what Heartbeat has been able to do to help low-income pregnant women and their families and thank you for helping to provide this assistance through the Ohio Parenting and Pregnancy Program.