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**Ohio Senate Health Committee  
Senate Bill 207  
Groundwork Ohio  
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Chairman Huffman, Vice Chair Johnson, Ranking Member Antonio and members of the committee, my name is Caitlin Feldman and I am the Policy Director with Groundwork Ohio. As a licensed social worker and policy advocate on behalf of young children and families, I am pleased to have the opportunity to share proponent testimony on Senate Bill 207 (SB207) to designate September 19<sup>th</sup> as Stillbirth Prevention Day.

Groundwork Ohio is a statewide, nonpartisan advocacy organization championing high-quality early learning and healthy development strategies from the prenatal period to age five that lay a strong foundation for Ohio kids, families, and communities.

Stillbirth, also referred to as fetal death, is the loss of a fetus at or after 20 weeks of pregnancy. This outcome requires mothers to give birth through induced labor, Cesarean birth, or other means. In 2021, the *Ohio Study of Associated Risks of Stillbirth* (other Ohio SOARS), reported 761 stillbirths in our state, an average of 6.2 fetal deaths per 1,000 live births.<sup>i</sup> This data mirrors Ohio’s infant mortality rates, only slightly worse at 7.0 deaths per 1,000 live births in the same year.<sup>ii</sup>

**Ohio’s Infant Mortality Rate Over Time**

	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021
<b>Overall</b>	7.6	7.4	6.8	7.2	7.4	7.2	6.9	6.9	6.7	7.0

Stillbirth is a profoundly devastating loss - a pain that lingers for a lifetime for families - yet it remains an underrecognized public health crisis. While

the exact cause of fetal death is not always identifiable, several risk factors have been well-documented, including:<sup>iii</sup>

- Medical conditions, such as diabetes, obesity, or high blood pressure.
- Lack of access to quality prenatal care, particularly in rural and marginalized communities. Ohio SOARS data reveals 16% of mothers who experienced stillbirth did not receive prenatal care during the first trimester.
- Additional risk factors include: Pregnancy-related conditions and history, such as being pregnant with more than one baby, first pregnancy, maternal age of 35 and over, or environmental exposures to pollution.
- And finally, Social factors and health disparities, often called *social determinants of health*, these factors are influenced by the conditions into which you are born, grow, work, live, and age.

Stillbirth disproportionately affects women from certain racial or ethnic backgrounds. According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, Black women experience stillbirth at nearly twice the rate of most other racial groups. Socioeconomic factors also play a significant role. 25% of Ohio SOARS survey respondents who experienced stillbirth reported an annual household income of \$16,000 or less. While these groups face heightened risks, it is essential to recognize that stillbirth can occur unexpectedly - even in healthy, low-risk pregnancies.

Experts estimate that nearly one in four stillbirths are potentially preventable.<sup>iv</sup> Quality prenatal care, screenings, and education are essential to meaningfully decreasing stillbirths. This bill offers an exciting opportunity to bring stillbirth out of the shadows and elevate solutions while emphasizing the need for continued research. Groundwork Ohio fully supports Senate Bill 207 to designate Stillbirth Prevention Day and we are pleased to see this legislation as we seek your support. I am happy to answer any questions you may have.

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<sup>i</sup> Ohio SOARS Survey. (2021). [Selected Findings from the 2021 Ohio Study of Associated Risks of Stillbirth](#) (Ohio SOARS).

<sup>ii</sup> Groundwork Ohio. (2024). [INFANT MORTALITY IN OHIO: A 10-Year look at the impact of policy changes and opportunities for the future.](#)

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iii Center for Disease Control and Prevention. (2024). [About Stillbirth.](#)

iv Page, J. M., et. al. (2018). [Potentially preventable stillbirth in a diverse U.S. cohort.](#) Obstetrics and Gynecology, 131(2), 336-343.

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