



Written Testimony Only

Supporting SB 42

Tracy Russell, Executive Director, Nurture KC

Chairman Hilderbrand and Members of the Senate Public Health and Welfare Committee:

My name is Tracy Russell and I serve as the Executive Director of [Nurture KC](#), an organization committed to reducing maternal and infant mortality in Kansas City. Nurture KC has 1 of 101 federal Healthy Start programs in the nation, serving both Kansas and Missouri families. Healthy Start utilizes a community health worker model to serve 700 mothers and babies residing in the 14 ZIP codes of Kansas City with the highest rates of infant mortality. Six of the ZIP codes we serve are in Wyandotte County. Healthy Start is a thirty-year-old program that combines one on one relationships with data collection to drive our work in an informed way based on evidence-based best practices. This is a winning combination as demonstrated by the ability of the families we serve to defy the odds dictated by their ZIP codes. For example, Healthy Start families are more likely to practice safe sleep for their babies and go to well-woman and well-child doctor visits than their peers. The ultimate evidence is the low incidence of maternal and infant mortality for Healthy Start families as compared to those who are not in the Healthy Start program but reside in the ZIP codes we serve.

SB 42 is an opportunity to build upon this method of letting the data drive action and response so that we are better able to target services and solutions. The occurrence of maternal morbidity and mortality in the United States is unacceptably high. The overall maternal mortality rate only tells part of the story. There is a crisis within the crisis as Black women die disproportionately at a rate that is 3 to 4 times that of their White counterparts. Collecting maternal mortality data by race is essential in understanding the scope of the disparity and developing a tailored response to reduce occurrence. In addition, SB 42 establishes a community review committee so that all factors for these outcomes are considered and not just those that fall under a narrow medical definition. The community review committee can provide a perspective that broadens potential solutions and interventions within the lived environment.

Thank you for introducing SB 42 and giving supporters an opportunity to weigh in on one of the most pressing and preventable health emergencies that we face. Kansas has an opportunity to prioritize women's health with SB 42.