



Lance Himes, General Counsel  
Ohio Department of Health  
Maternity and Newborn Advisory Council  
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Chairman Jordan and members of the Sunset Review Committee, thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony on the Maternity and Newborn Advisory Council. My name is Lance Himes, and I serve as General Counsel for the Ohio Department of Health.

The Maternity and Newborn Advisory Council, also known as the MNAC, was created in 2008 for the purpose of advising and consulting with the Director of Health on the following:

- Development of rules for maternity units, newborn care nurseries, and maternity homes;
- Implementation and enforcement of those rules;
- Development of inspection criteria, procedures, and guidelines; and
- Recommendations to improve maternity and newborn care in Ohio.

The council is also required to prepare an annual report evaluating the Department's enforcement of hospital maternity unit rules. The council of 18 includes Governor's appointees who are health care practitioners, and a member of the public. Members are authorized by the Ohio Revised Code to be compensated for actual expenses, including travel.

Currently, the MNAC is working with ODH to bring the maternity and newborn regulations up to current national professional standards. Important objectives include utilizing existing national standards and other evidence based standards in the development of new regulations. Overall, MNAC's advisory role contributes to ensuring that members of the public have continuing access to quality maternity and newborn care in Ohio's hospitals and maternity homes. Maternity unit oversight ensures that at-risk mothers and infants are matched to facilities that can manage their complex care, one of the state's numerous strategies to combat infant mortality. ODH has been working closely with hospitals and clinicians through the MNAC process, and other forums, to improve patient safety and care issues in that setting.

At this time, ODH would request reauthorization for the Maternal and Newborn Advisory Council given the state's ongoing efforts to address Ohio's infant mortality rate. However, ODH recommends providing greater flexibility in the statutorily required membership. Pursuant to R.C. 3711.20, there are six nurse positions on the council with different qualifications for each, often making it difficult to identify nurses who meet the prescriptive qualifications when filling vacancies. ODH recommends maintaining the number of nurses but simplifying requirements so that there are three registered nurses who provide newborn care and three registered nurses who provide obstetric care serving on the council.

Thank you for your consideration, and I am available to answer any questions you may have at this time.