

Maryland Families for Safe Birth, Inc.



SB 879

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The Honorable Delores Kelley
Chair, Senate Finance Committee
Miller Senate Office Building, 3 East Wing
11 Bladen St., Annapolis, MD 21401

March 5, 2020

Dear Chair Kelley and Members of the Senate Finance Committee:

Maryland Families for Safe Birth is a grassroots, consumer based organization dedicated to improving maternity care in the state of Maryland. We represent all families in Maryland, with the support of over 1500 active members. We are writing in opposition to Senate Bill 879.

The Maryland Infant Lifetime Care Trust is an effort to minimize the financial impact of birth injury lawsuits on hospitals. That may well be an effort that is worthwhile, but only if it were limited to situations in which negligence did not occur. Giving hospitals financial immunity from negligence related to birth outcomes is not going to improve maternity care overall.

Simply put, this bill provides little, if any, protection for consumers of maternity care.

Imagine that your baby suffers a severe birth injury requiring lifetime care. Imagine that every time you need to access funds to take care of your injured child, you must appeal to a board that manages your ability to access the monetary resources necessary to care for your child. Suppose an experimental treatment becomes available. It is very likely that it will not be approved by the board. The bill, in fact, states that someone other than you, the parent, will decide what care is appropriate for your child. In an already incredibly difficult situation, are we really asking parents to hand over control of the medical care their child can receive?

Imagine that you have a perfectly normal birth and your baby is fine. According to this bill, the hospital will be allowed to increase their maternity care fees in order to offset the costs of their required contribution to the fund. As a result, your completely normal birth will cost even more.

This bill will hurt every single consumer of maternity care in Maryland. We represent those families, and strongly urge you to oppose SB 879.

If a solution to mitigate costs for hospitals is deemed necessary, it must be structured differently than is conveyed in this bill. It must be structured in a way that is not harmful to your constituents.

Sincerely,

Dr. Kirra L Brandon
President, Maryland Families for Safe Birth