

SUPPORT OF SENATE BILL 201
Public Health - Childbirth - Paternity Test
Finance Committee
February 8, 2024
FAVORABLE

Good afternoon, Chair Beidle, Vice Chair Klausmeiser, and Finance Committee members. I am Derrick Whiting, representing the collective voice of **Social Work Advocates for Social Change**, a passionate graduate student coalition at the University of Maryland School of Social Work. On behalf of our organization, I am writing to express our enthusiastic support for Senate Bill 201.

In the existing legal framework, the process of establishing paternity can be complex and sometimes emotionally charged. Senate Bill 201 proposes a straightforward and timely solution by requiring attending physicians, when a child is born at a health care facility, to offer the presumed father the option to take a paternity test.

The provisions outlined in the bill aim to streamline the paternity establishment process. By mandating the attending physician to make an oral and written offer for a paternity test before the completion of the birth certificate form, the bill ensures that fathers have a clear and early opportunity to establish paternity.

This proposed legislation acknowledges the significance of accurate and timely paternity determination, fostering a sense of responsibility and commitment from all parties involved. Moreover, by allowing the presumed father the option to waive the paternity test or elect to take it at a later time, the bill respects individual choices while promoting transparency in familial relationships.

I am particularly pleased that Senate Bill 201 recognizes practical limitations by exempting situations where the attending physician is unable to contact the presumed father of the child. This demonstrates a thoughtful approach to real-world scenarios and ensures that the legislation remains feasible and effective.

In conclusion, I believe Senate Bill 201 represents a positive step forward in enhancing the legal processes surrounding paternity determination. Social Work Advocates for Social Change wholeheartedly supports this legislation with Amendments addressing the cost of paternity tests. By providing a standardized procedure for offering paternity tests at childbirth, the bill promotes fairness, clarity, and responsible parenting.

I respectfully urge the Finance Committee to support and pass Senate Bill 201. Thank you for your attention to this matter and for your ongoing commitment to the well-being of Maryland's families.

I urge you to issue a favorable report for SB 201 with amendments.



For more information, please contact

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Social Work Advocates for Social Change is a coalition of MSW students at the University of Maryland School of Social Work that seeks to promote equity and justice through public policy, and to engage the communities impacted by public policy in the policymaking process.