



DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH

Wes Moore, Governor · Aruna Miller, Lt. Governor · Laura Herrera Scott, M.D., M.P.H., Secretary

February 8, 2024

The Honorable Pamela Beidle
Chair, Finance Committee
3 East Miller Senate Office Building
Annapolis, MD 21401-1991

RE: Senate Bill 59 – Safe Sleep for Infants – Awareness and Certification – Letter of Information

Dear Chair Beidle and Committee Members:

The Maryland Department of Health (Department) respectfully submits this letter of information for Senate Bill (SB) 59 – Safe Sleep for Infants – Awareness and Certification. This bill requires the Department to develop and implement a public awareness campaign to promote education regarding safe sleep for infants and establishes the Maryland Safe Sleep Certification Program. The Program requires child care centers to obtain certification, while hospitals and freestanding birthing centers must be certified by Cribs for Kids.

In 2021, Sudden Infant Death Syndrome (SIDS) was the leading cause of postneonatal infant deaths in Maryland, with 45 fatalities. Sudden unexpected infant deaths (SUID), including SIDS, accidental suffocation, and unknown causes, increased by nearly 18% from 58 in 2020 to 74 in 2021.¹ Many SUID deaths are related to unsafe sleep environments and practices.²

In Maryland, between 2018-2022, there were zero (0) infant or child fatalities at licensed child care centers, four (4) sleep-related infant deaths in licensed home child care settings, and three (3) sleep-related infant deaths in unlicensed home child care settings.³ Currently, Maryland has regulations ensuring infant safe sleep practices align with the American Academy of Pediatrics Safe Sleep Guidelines in child care centers.⁴ Regional Maryland State Department of Education (MSDE) staff conduct annual reviews and onsite inspections to enforce regulatory compliance. Any complaints related to safe sleep concerns are promptly investigated, and an onsite visit is conducted. Given MSDE's oversight and implementation of guidelines for child care centers, the proposed Maryland Safe Sleep Certification Program outlined in SB 59 is duplicative of current efforts.

The Cribs for Kids National Infant Safe Sleep Hospital Certification criteria were developed based on the AAP 2022 Safe Infant Sleep Guidelines, with input from medical experts of the AAP Safe Sleep Task Force.⁵ This certification, which is free and valid for 5 years, requires hospitals to submit annual reports

¹ 2021 Vital Statistics Administration Infant Mortality Report:

https://health.maryland.gov/vsa/Documents/Reports%20and%20Data/Infant%20Mortality/InfantMortalityAnnualReport_2021_Final.pdf

² Figure 14, 2020 Child Fatality Review Report: http://dlslibrary.state.md.us/publications/Exec/MDH/FHA/HG5-704%28b%29%2812%29_2020.pdf

³ National Center for Fatality Review and Prevention, National Fatality Review Case Reporting System: <https://ncfrp.org/data/nfr-crs/>

⁴ COMAR 13A.15.05.06, 13A.15.09.01, 13A.15.10.06, 13A.16.09.01, 13A.16.09.04, 13A.16.10.05, 13A.18.09.01, 13A.18.09.04, 13A.18.10.05

⁵ Cribs for Kids Certificates and Manuals: <https://cribsforkids.org/manual-guides/>

and re-certification applications.⁵ Currently, only 4 out of 32 birthing hospitals in Maryland hold this certification.⁶ Cribs for Kids does not currently offer certification for freestanding birth centers.

In early 2023, MDH updated its Infant Safe Sleep webpage to include guidance for families, caregivers, and birthing hospitals.⁷ A new Infant Safe Sleep one-pager and social media toolkit were also developed and distributed to local health departments (LHDs) and community partners. Additionally, MDH provides grants to LHDs to distribute Infant Safe Sleep materials and a combination of durable goods such as cribs, portable cribs, educational onesies, and safe sleep educational videos through the Babies Born Healthy (BBH) and Surveillance and Quality Improvement (SQI) programs. BBH and SQI support perinatal care coordination activities and infant and child fatality review and prevention activities, respectively.

This bill would have both an operational and fiscal impact on MDH, including additional staff and resources to fulfill the requirements. If you would like to discuss this further, please do not hesitate to contact Sarah Case-Herron, Director of Governmental Affairs at sarah.case-herron@maryland.gov.

Sincerely,



Laura Herrera Scott, M.D., M.P.H.
Secretary

⁶ Cribs for Kids Hospital Certification: <https://cribsforkids.org/hospitalcertification/>

⁷ Infant Safe Sleep: https://health.maryland.gov/phpa/mch/pages/safe_sleep.aspx