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MAYOR

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HB0177

February 7, 2024

TO: Members of the House Health and Government Operations Committee

FROM: Brandon M. Scott, Mayor of the City of Baltimore

RE: House Bill 177 – Hospitals – Care of Infants After Discharge

POSITION: FAVORABLE

Chair Peña-Melnyk, Vice Chair Cullison, and Members of the Committee, please be advised that on behalf of the Baltimore City Administration (BCA), I **support** House Bill (HB) 177.

HB 177 requires that Maryland’s birthing hospitals provide birthing parents/guardians with written and verbal education prior to postpartum discharge about how to provide a safe sleep environment for their babies, as well as information about the risks of not providing a safe sleep environment. This education will be in accordance with current recommendations from the American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP). Hospitals will also be required to provide birthing parents/guardians with a list of resources generated by local health departments to help parents provide a safe sleep environment (e.g., resources for accessing low- or no-cost cribs). Local health departments are aware of this requirement, which should not present an administrative burden. This bill will ensure our hospitals implement simple, cost-effective measures proven to save infant lives.ⁱ

In 2021 (the latest year for which data is available), **50 babies in Maryland died in their sleep due to known or suspected accidental suffocation.** Sleep-related deaths (familarly referred to as “SIDS”) are the second leading cause of infant death in Baltimore City, accounting for 30% of all infant deaths in 2021, and the third leading cause of infant death in Maryland. Data from the Baltimore City Child Fatality Review, which conducts in-depth reviews of every sleep-related infant death in the city, show that in 100% of the city’s 68 sleep-related infant deaths from 2018 to 2022, the baby was placed to sleep in an unsafe environment. Every death was determined to be likely preventable.

The American Academy of Pediatrics recommends proven methods to reduce the risk of sleep-related infant deaths.ⁱⁱ All families must be given information about how to provide a safe sleep environment for their baby; this education saves lives and prevents unspeakable tragedy. Baltimore City’s B’more for Healthy Babies (BHB) initiative has shown that saturating a community with information on safe sleep can prevent these deaths – in particular, through promoting the “ABCDs

of Safe Sleep:” that babies should be put to sleep **A**lone, on their **B**acks, in **C**ribs, in a smoke-free environment (**D**on’t Smoke).ⁱⁱⁱ

Hospitals play an essential role in ensuring that families understand the need to practice the ABCDs of Safe Sleep from the moment a baby is discharged home.ⁱ Over the past 15 years, BHB has worked collaboratively with all birthing hospitals in Baltimore City to implement postpartum safe sleep education efforts as outlined in this bill. However, due to challenges including staff and leadership turnover and competing priorities such as those related to the COVID-19 pandemic, hospitals’ implementation of safe sleep education practices has been inconsistent. Baltimore City Child Fatality Review has found that **there was no safe sleep education documented by the birthing hospital in 57% of deaths reviewed** from 2018 to 2022.

This bill requires no financial or material outlay by Maryland’s hospitals for compliance. Evidence-based guidelines from the AAP and free educational materials based on those guidelines are readily available free of charge through the Maryland Department of Health. A favorable report on this bill will ensure that with minimal effort, hospitals will help prevent unnecessary infant deaths in our state.

For these reasons, I respectfully request a **favorable** report on HB 177.

ⁱ Krugman, S. & Cumpsty-Fowler, C. (2018). A Hospital-Based Initiative to Reduce Postdischarge Sudden Unexpected Infant Deaths. *Hosp Pediatr* (2018) 8 (8): 443–449. <https://doi.org/10.1542/hpeds.2017-0211>

ⁱⁱ Moon, R., Carlin, R., & Hand, I. (2022). Sleep-Related Infant Deaths: Updated 2022 Recommendations for Reducing Infant Deaths in the Sleep Environment. *American Academy of Pediatrics. PEDIATRICS* Volume 150, number 1, 2022:e2022057990. <https://doi.org/10.1542/peds.2022-057990>

ⁱⁱⁱ Baltimore City Health Department. (2024). B’more for Healthy Babies. Retrieved from <https://health.baltimorecity.gov/maternal-and-child-health/bmore-healthy-babies>