



Testimony in Support of House Bill 177

Hospitals - Care of Infants After Discharge

To: Chair Joseline A. Pena-Melnyk and Members of the Health and Government Operations Committee

From: Demaune A. Millard, President & CEO, Family League of Baltimore

Date: February 7, 2024

Family League of Baltimore (Family League) supports House Bill 177 as it would require a hospital to provide oral and written instructions to the parent or legal guardian of an infant before the hospital discharges the new born into the care of a parent or legal guardian. HB 177 would also require a hospital to inquire as to whether a parent or legal guardian is able to provide a safe sleep environment and a bassinet, crib, or portable crib. Lastly, the hospital would provide parents or legal guardians with a list of resources to obtain the necessary items.

Family League serves as an implementing partner in B'more Healthy Babies (BHB), a collective impact strategy aimed at addressing infant mortality while further closing the disparity gaps in birth outcomes. In alignment with BHB, to ensure that babies are born healthy we support legislation that raises the critical awareness of Safe Sleep for Infants. This bill aims to provide extensive education and resources to the parents before they leave the hospital.

Sudden infant death syndrome (SIDS) is one of the leading causes of post neonatal mortality, which is why it is important to provide education and certifications to Baltimoreans and Marylanders alike. Unfortunately, the city of Baltimore has seen an increase in the number of SIDS since the pandemic, in 2023 there was a total of 18 which is the same amount from 2022. Having this legislation in place would help decrease infant sleep-related deaths.

In FY23, Health Care Access Maryland's (HCAM) Care Coordination program delivered 346 free cribs in Baltimore and provided safe sleep education and environmental assessments to 467 residents. So far in FY24, the Safe Sleep team has already delivered 219 cribs. Care coordination plays a crucial role in connecting pregnant and postpartum individuals to resources, spreading the message about safe sleep in communities, and providing families with a safe sleep environment for their infant.

As the designated Local Management Board for the City of Baltimore, Family League works collaboratively to support data-informed, community-driven solutions to align resources to dismantle systemic barriers that limit the possibilities for children, families, and communities. Our policy focus is also guided by and in support of the Governor's Office of Children Results for Child Well-Being. Through our strategic planning process, we have prioritized three of these results areas, focusing on the success of Baltimore's children in school; the economic stability of families; and the safety of communities for children, youth, and families. We support HB177 in

particular because of its alignment with the result areas that work to ensure “Babies Are Born Healthy.”

For more information contact Keontae Kells, Executive Administrator kkells@familyleague.org