

THE COALITION TO PROTECT MARYLAND'S CHILDREN

Our Mission: To combine and amplify the power of organizations and citizens working together to keep children safe from abuse and neglect. We strive to secure budgetary and public policy resources to make meaningful and measurable improvements in safety, permanence, and wellbeing.



SB0156- Workgroup on Universal Newborn Nurse Home Visiting Services - Establishment Health & Government Operations Committee March 19, 2025

Position: SUPPORT

The Coalition to Protect Maryland's Children is a consortium of organizations and individuals formed in 1996 who are concerned about the care of Maryland's most vulnerable children and work together to promote meaningful child welfare reform. **CPMC urges a favorable report on SB0156 - Workgroup on Universal Newborn Nurse Home Visiting Services - Establishment.**¹

SB0156 seeks to create a workgroup to develop "universal" newborn home visiting services offered to parents, such as the Family Connects program currently does in three areas in Maryland, provided within 12 weeks after a newborn's birth, throughout all areas of Maryland. This legislation calls for exploration of funding sources and various models which would offer health and wellness checks for all birth parents and newborns in their homes with well-trained medical professionals at no charge to families, with community-based referrals made for other supportive services.

Advocates for child welfare seeking to reduce instances of child maltreatment are excited by the potential of this workgroup. Having it offered to every family with a newborn reduces any stigma that birth parents may feel about asking for help when facing postpartum, parenting, and/or baby bonding challenges by providing services and support to everyone. Programs like Family Connects operate by making the first contact with the family within 2 weeks after the newborn's birth with up to three visits carried out in the home within the first 12 weeks. With each visit, the professionally trained nurse would assess and respond to issues surrounding maternal health, infant health, postpartum depression or anxiety, intimate partner violence, substance use disorder, household material supports, family and community safety, and meeting basic needs – holistically and without judgement.

A clinical longitudinal trial about this Family Connects program was conducted in Durham County, North Carolina, concluding with positive results. It was found that families assigned to the program had 39% fewer child protective service investigations for suspected child maltreatment and 33% fewer child emergency medical care visits through the first 5 years of the child's life. As the participants were randomly assigned, positive effects held across birth risk, child health insurance, the child's gender, single-parent status, and racial/ethnic groups.²

We feel strongly that the outcome of this workgroup holds much promise in improving maternal and infant health outcomes and reducing maltreatment of our youngest, most vulnerable children. Maryland should make the investment to offer these services to as many families as possible. It is for these reasons that the Coalition to Protect Maryland's Children **urges a favorable report on SB0156 - Workgroup on Universal Newborn Nurse Home Visiting Services – Establishment.**

¹ Members of CPMC represented by this written testimony include: Catholic Charities of Baltimore, Center for Hope, Child Justice, Citizens Review Board for Children, Court Appointed Special Advocates (Maryland), Court Appointed Special Advocates (Baltimore County), The Family Tree, The American Academy of Pediatrics – MD Chapter, Maryland Association of Resources for Families and Youth, National Association of Social Workers – MD Chapter, and State Council on Child Abuse & Neglect.

² JAMA Network Open. 2021;4(7):e2116024. doi:10.1001/jamanetworkopen.2021.16024