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Finance Committee



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THE SENATE OF MARYLAND
ANNAPOLIS, MARYLAND 21401

**Testimony of Senator Hayes in Support of Senate Bill 944:
Hospitals - Care of Infants After Discharge**

March 5, 2020

Dear Chairwoman Kelley and Members of the Finance Committee,

Senate Bill 944 proposes to require all labor and delivery hospitals in Maryland to provide parents and legal guardians of newborns with instructions concerning how to put their infants to sleep safely. Verbal and written instructions would include how to provide a safe sleep environment, avoid shaking baby syndrome, cope with crying infants, and any other recommendations deemed necessary by the hospital.

Furthermore, the bill proposes that hospital staff ask if the parent or legal guardian can provide the infant with a bassinet, crib, or portable crib and, if the parent or legal guardian indicates that they cannot, that the hospital provides a list of resources to obtain the items necessary for a safe sleep environment. The bill specifies that the instruction can be supported with an instructional video, many of which already exist and are of excellent quality. Additionally, the bill proposes that each parent or legal guardian sign a form confirming their understanding of the instructions provided.

Sleep-related infant death (SIDS) is the single leading cause of infant death up to one year of age after leaving the hospital and is entirely preventable. Currently, sleep-related infant deaths are the third leading cause of infant death in Maryland, with an average of 56 sleep-related infant deaths referred by the Office of Chief Medical Examiner each year. In the Infant Mortality in 2017, non-hispanic black infants were more than twice as likely to die from sleep-related infant deaths compared with non-hispanic white infants according to the Maryland Department of Health. This exemplifies an unacceptable racial disparity in infant sleep-related education.

Senate Bill 944 is based on clear recommendations from the American Academy of Pediatrics, which states the proper education needed to reduce the risk of SIDS. Since most Maryland newborns will be born at labor and delivery hospitals, these institutions are the most critical for informing new parents of sleep-related care. This bill would require no financial or material outlay by Maryland's hospitals for compliance. In fact, all hospitals in Baltimore City have

implemented this practice by incorporating existing protocol, education, and materials in the flow of patient discharge.

Infant mortality is a critical marker of the overall health of our State. The purpose of Senate Bill 944 is to ensure that every baby born in Maryland has the opportunity for a healthy and safe sleeping environment in the first year of life. Not all infant deaths are preventable, but when they are, we must do all we can to ensure preventative education for parents, regardless of their race or socioeconomic status. Senate Bill 944 would require the education needed to reduce the risk of SIDS in our State.

Thus, I urge a favorable report on Senate Bill 944.

Respectfully,



Senator Antonio L. Hayes
Chair, Baltimore City Senate Delegation
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