

SB0891

Dr. Frank Arlinghaus

Favorable

Please issue a favorable opinion on Senate Bill 891. In order to be brief, I restrict my comments to perinatal hospice.

Perinatal hospice and palliative care is a relatively new field, proposed in 1997, and growing to over 300 programs worldwide, including at least 9 programs in Maryland. These include programs through Anne Arundel Medical Center, Chesapeake Kids, Gilchrist Kids, Holy Cross Hospital, Howard County General Hospital, Isaiah's Promise, Johns Hopkins Hospital, Shady Grove Medical Center, and SilverLeaf Counseling Services. These programs find wide support among the community of perinatal medical professionals, but are often not widely known among the general population.

These programs provide help for families to help continue pregnancies for lives expected to be brief (life limiting conditions), helping parents through this most difficult of times from the time of diagnosis. Too often, parents who experience an adverse prenatal diagnosis are not given adequate support or direction to resources that will support them. These programs give parents real help, real choices, and real support.

For some of us, the choice to terminate a pregnancy is unthinkable; for others, it doesn't seem like the compassionate choice under the circumstances. Without support or knowledge of the support, however, each of us feels limited in our options and pressured to make what we think is a bad choice. These programs, on the other hand, provide us the support to embrace the all-to-brief shining moments of parenthood, celebrating and grieving in their turn with the support of others.

This bill would ensure more parents experiencing an adverse prenatal diagnosis would be presented with information to help inform and support them. For this reason, I ask that you return a favorable report on SB0891.