



To: Delegate Wivell, Chair and Members of the House Government Operations Committee
From: Erin Jones, Director, Legislative and Strategic Counsel, March of Dimes
Date: March 19, 2021
Re: SUPPORT –HB1112– Public Health – Maternal and Child Mortality – Review and Perinatal Hospice Services

Dear Delegate Wivell, Chair and Members of the House Government Operations Committee:

The March of Dimes Inc. would like to express support for HB1112. This legislation will expand the State’s current Maternal Mortality Review Program by offering perinatal hospice programs and resources to families and their babies. Perinatal hospice would offer comprehensive support to a pregnant woman and her family that includes support from the time of diagnosis through the time of birth and death of her baby as well as through the postpartum period.

Neonatal death happens in about 4 in 1,000 babies (less than 1 percent) each year in the United States.ⁱ Non-Hispanic black women are more likely to have a baby die than women of other races or ethnicities. Premature birth and low birthweight cause about 1 in 4 neonatal deaths (25 percent). Birth defects cause about 1 in 5 neonatal deaths (20 percent).ⁱⁱ

The diagnosis of a lethal fetal anomaly poses significant challenges for obstetricians, pediatricians, and clinicians, who often have little experience or training in how to best care for the baby and the grieving parents. According to one study, the most profound effect these pregnancies can leave on families is often a psychological one.ⁱⁱⁱ

Perinatal hospice offers the parents of babies with life-limiting conditions the chance to love and cherish their newborns for whatever time they have, from a few minutes to days, weeks or even months. These important programs offer a model of care, an extra layer of support that can easily be incorporated into standard pregnancy and birth care. Ideally, it is a comprehensive and multidisciplinary team approach that can include obstetricians, perinatologists, labor & delivery nurses, neonatologists, NICU staff, clergy, and social workers, as well as genetic counselors, midwives, traditional hospice and palliative care professionals, and others.

A multidisciplinary approach with continuity of care is essential in helping these families understand and adjust to the diagnosis and is also necessary to ensure quality of care through pregnancy, labor and delivery. It is for these reasons March of Dimes urges the Senate Finance Committee for a favorable report on HB1112. Thank you.

Sincerely,

Erin Jones
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ⁱ <https://www.marchofdimes.org/complications/neonatal-death.aspx>

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ⁱⁱⁱ https://carryingtoterms.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/12/Hospice_Palliative_Care_Study.pdf