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SB0059

February 8, 2024

TO: Members of the Senate Finance Committee
FROM: Nina Themelis, Director of Mayor's Office of Government Relations
RE: Senate Bill 59 – Safe Sleep for Infants - Awareness and Certification
POSITION: FAVORABLE WITH AMMENDMENTS

Chair Beidle, Vice Chair Klausmeier, and Members of the Committee, please be advised that the Baltimore City Administration (BCA) **supports** Senate Bill (SB) 59 **with amendments**.

SB 59 requires the Maryland Department of Health (MDH) to develop a public awareness campaign about safe infant sleep. It also requires MDH to develop and administer a safe sleep certification program in collaboration with the national organization “Cribs for Kids,” and for childcare centers, hospitals, and birthing centers to become safe sleep certified through the program.

In 2021 (the latest year for which data is available), **50 babies in Maryland died in their sleep due to known or suspected accidental suffocation**. Sleep-related deaths are the second leading cause of infant death in Baltimore City, accounting for 30% of all infant deaths, and the third leading cause of infant death in Maryland. Data from the Baltimore City Child Fatality Review, which conducts in-depth reviews of every sleep-related infant death in the city, show that in 100% of the 68 sleep-related infant deaths from 2018 to 2022, the baby was placed to sleep in an unsafe environment with suffocation hazards. Every death was determined to be likely preventable.

The American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP) has put forth recommendations that are shown to reduce infant sleep-related deaths. Among these are that the infant sleeps alone, on their back, in a crib, and in a smoke-free environment.ⁱ However, not everyone knows this vital information. B'more for Healthy Babies (BHB) has shown that saturating a community with information on safe sleep environments can prevent these deaths. Hospitals play an essential role in ensuring that families understand the need to practice safe sleep and have been shown to measuredly impact rates of sleep-related infant death in the community.ⁱⁱ Over the past 15 years, BHB has worked collaboratively with all birthing hospitals in Baltimore City to implement postpartum safe sleep education efforts. However, due to challenges including staff and leadership turnover and

competing priorities such as those related to the COVID-19 pandemic, hospitals' implementation of safe sleep education practices has been inconsistent. Baltimore City Child Fatality Review has found that **there was no safe sleep education documented by the birthing hospital in 57% of deaths reviewed** (39 of 68 deaths from 2018 to 2022).

The BCA strongly supports efforts to increase knowledge about safe sleep at all touchpoints – including hospitals, birthing centers, and childcare facilities. However, the Administration respectfully recommends several amendments:

- MDH has already created a safe sleep education campaign, complete with an education toolkit that includes one-pagers and social media materials. These materials are available online free of chargeⁱⁱⁱ. As such, the requirement for MDH to create a campaign can be struck from the bill.
- The BCA appreciates the bill's mission to ensure that relevant stakeholders are adequately aware of and trained in safe sleep practices. However, national certification programs already exist (such as Cribs for Kids, referenced in the bill). Rather than require MDH to create a new program or name a specific program that may cease to exist in the future, the BCA respectfully recommends striking the requirement for MDH to create a Program and adopt an amendment to require the specified stakeholders to become certified through a national program aligned with AAP recommendations.

For these reasons, the BCA respectfully request a **favorable with amendments** report on SB 59.

ⁱ Moon, R., Carlin, R., & Hand, I. (2022). Sleep-Related Infant Deaths: Updated 2022 Recommendations for Reducing Infant Deaths in the Sleep Environment. American Academy of Pediatrics. PEDIATRICS Volume 150, number 1, 2022:e2022057990. <https://doi.org/10.1542/peds.2022-057990>

ⁱⁱ Krugman, S. & Cumpsty-Fowler, C. (2018). A Hospital-Based Initiative to Reduce Postdischarge Sudden Unexpected Infant Deaths. *Hosp Pediatr* (2018) 8 (8): 443–449. <https://doi.org/10.1542/hpeds.2017-0211>

ⁱⁱⁱ https://health.maryland.gov/phpa/mch/pages/safe_sleep.aspx