



BRANDON M. SCOTT
MAYOR

*Office of Government Relations
88 State Circle
Annapolis, Maryland 21401*

SB0059

April 2, 2024

TO: Members of the House Health and Government Operations Committee

FROM: Nina Themelis, Director of Mayor's Office of Government Relations

RE: Senate Bill 59 – Hospitals – Care of Infants After Discharge (Safe Sleep Act of 2024)

POSITION: FAVORABLE

Chair Peña-Melnyk, Vice Chair Cullison, and Members of the Committee, please be advised that the Baltimore City Administration (BCA) **supports** Senate Bill (SB) 59.

SB 59 is a priority bill for the BCA. Although not listed as a cross-file, it is identical to Delegate Robbyn Lewis' HB 177, a consensus bill that has already passed the House. SB 59 requires that Maryland's birthing hospitals provide birthing parents/guardians with written and verbal education prior to postpartum discharge about how to provide a safe sleep environment for their babies, as well as information about the risks of not providing a safe sleep environment. This education will be in accordance with current recommendations from the American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP). Hospitals will also be required to provide birthing parents/guardians with a county-specific list of resources generated by local health departments to help parents provide a safe sleep environment (e.g., where to access low- or no-cost cribs). Local health departments are aware of this requirement, which should not present an administrative burden. This bill will ensure our hospitals implement simple, cost-effective measures proven to save infant lives.ⁱ

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 in 2021, 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 city's 68 sleep-related infant deaths from 2018 to 2022, the baby was placed to sleep in an unsafe environment. Every death was determined to be likely preventable.

The AAP has put forth recommendations 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.ⁱⁱ 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 measurably impact rates of sleep-related infant death in the community.ⁱⁱⁱ 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).

This bill requires no financial or material outlay by Maryland's hospitals for compliance. Evidence-based guidelines from the AAP and free educational materials based on those guidelines are readily available free of charge through the Maryland Department of Health. A favorable report on this bill will ensure that with minimal effort, hospitals will help prevent unnecessary infant deaths in our state. The BCA respectfully request a **favorable** report on SB 59.

ⁱ 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>

ⁱⁱ 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>

ⁱⁱⁱ 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>