



DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH

Wes Moore, Governor · Aruna Miller, Lt. Governor · Laura Herrera Scott, M.D., M.P.H., Secretary

April 2, 2024

The Honorable Joseline A. Peña-Melnyk
Chair, House Health and Government Operations Committee
Room 241, House Office Building
Annapolis, Maryland 21401

RE: Senate Bill 59 - Hospitals - Care of Infants After Discharge (Safe Sleep Act of 2024)- Letter of Support as Amended

Dear Chair Peña-Melnyk and Committee Members:

The Maryland Department of Health (Department) respectfully submits this letter of support as amended for Senate Bill (SB) 59 – Hospitals - Care of Infants After Discharge (Safe Sleep Act of 2024). SB 59 requires hospitals to provide certain oral and written instructions on how to provide a safe sleep environment to the parent or legal guardian of an infant before discharge. Furthermore, this bill requires hospitals to ask parents and guardians if they can provide a safe sleep environment. If a parent or guardian expresses that they cannot provide a safe sleep environment, SB 59 requires that the hospital provide to the parents or guardians a list of resources to assist in obtaining the necessary equipment for ensuring a safe sleep environment. The Department, in collaboration with local health officers, is tasked with developing and maintaining this list.

In 2021, Sudden Infant Death Syndrome (SIDS) was the leading cause of postneonatal infant deaths in Maryland, accounting for 45 deaths. Sudden unexpected infant deaths (SUID), including SIDS, accidental suffocation, and unknown causes, increased by nearly 18% from 58 in 2020 to 74 in 2021.¹ Many SUID deaths are related to unsafe sleep environments and practices.² In their most recent Safe Infant Sleep Recommendations, the American Academy of Pediatrics stated that it is “essential that physicians, nonphysician clinicians, hospital staff, and child care providers endorse and model safe infant sleep guidelines from the beginning of pregnancy.”³ Currently, Connecticut, Florida, Illinois, and Michigan have passed legislation requiring birthing hospitals to provide anticipatory guidance on safe sleep practices and environments to parents and guardians prior to discharge.⁴ The Code of Maryland Regulations (COMAR) requires hospitals to have written policy to address infant safety issues such as safe sleep. However, the regulations do not require hospitals share this resource with parents or guardians.⁵ This bill would provide the standardization at the hospital-level necessary to begin addressing infant safe sleep shortly after birth for the majority of newborns in Maryland.

¹ 2021 Vital Statistics Administration Infant Mortality Report

https://health.maryland.gov/vsa/Documents/Reports%20and%20Data/Infant%20Mortality/InfantMortalityAnnualReport_2021_Final.pdf

² Figure 14, 2020 Child Fatality Review Report

https://dlslibrary.state.md.us/publications/Exec/MDH/FHA/HG5-704%28b%29%2812%29_2020.pdf

³ Sleep-Related Infant Deaths: Updated 2022 Recommendations for Reducing Infant Deaths in the Sleep Environment

<https://publications.aap.org/pediatrics/article/150/1/e2022057990/188304/Sleep-Related-Infant-Deaths-Updated-2022?autologincheck=redirected>

⁴ Bechtel K, Gawel M, Vincent GA, Violano P. Impact of statewide safe sleep legislation on hospital practices and rates of sudden unexpected infant deaths. *Inj Epidemiol.* 2020;7(Suppl 1):22. Published 2020 Jun 12. doi:10.1186/s40621-020-00247-0

⁵ COMAR 30.08.12.15 <https://dsd.maryland.gov/regulations/Pages/30.08.12.15.aspx>

Based on a recent survey conducted by the Department, all local health departments (LHDs) report distributing printed infant safe sleep materials to program participants, and a combination of durable equipment such as cribs, portable cribs, educational onesies and safe sleep educational videos. The Department provides grants to LHDs to distribute these materials and equipment through Babies Born Healthy (BBH) and Surveillance and Quality Improvement (SQI) programs. BBH and SQI support perinatal care coordination activities, and infant and child fatality review and prevention activities, respectively.

If you would like to discuss this further, please do not hesitate to contact Sarah Case-Herron, Director of Governmental Affairs at sarah.case-herron@maryland.gov.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Laura Herrera Scott". The signature is written in a cursive style and is enclosed within a faint, light blue rectangular border.

Laura Herrera Scott, M.D., M.P.H.
Secretary