

Testimony in Support of SB 156 and HB 334: Universal Newborn Nurse Home Visiting Services – Program Establishment and Insurance Coverage

My name is Alyssa Frederick.

Family Connects saved my life.

I was adjusting to the joys and challenges of new motherhood, just having been released from Frederick Health Hospital with my new baby girl, Aurora, after having to have an emergency C-section. I received a visit from Gillian, my Family Connects nurse, and I felt an instant connection with her. She laid the foundation of trust with her gentle manner. She took my blood pressure and noticed something was wrong. My blood pressure was high- something like 158/90. We sat a minute or two and took it again, but it was not going down. So, we waited a few more minutes and tried again a third time with that last time reaching 160/110. Although I had never had a blood pressure problem before, Gillian strongly advised that I go to the ER immediately. Admittedly, I was apprehensive. Like many new mothers, I did not want to leave my newborn—even for a moment. However, Gillian quelled my apprehension by letting me know I could bring my baby along. Her prompting saved me, as I ended up being readmitted with postnatal pre-eclampsia.

To be clear, my apprehension at returning to the hospital had nothing to do with the quality of care I received at Frederick Health Hospital. The fear of separation is something I know many mothers experience. It is a fear that makes us hesitate. Family Connects helped me through that hesitation with their comprehensive, compassionate care; giving me the courage to prioritize my health.

For Black women, postnatal support is especially critical. The truth is, Black mothers face higher rates of complications during pregnancy and postpartum, yet we are often less likely to receive timely care or even be taken seriously when we complain or present illness. It is a harsh reality, and it is why services like Family Connects are essential. Family Connects offers support that bridges gaps in our healthcare

Family Connects recognizes that postpartum support goes beyond routine medical checkups. They are there not only for the physical health of mothers but also for our mental resilience and emotional stability. They understand that new mothers need guidance, comfort, and reassurance that someone is there to watch over both them and their children during such a vulnerable time.

Thanks to Family Connects, I am here to share my story and to advocate for programs that prioritize every mother's health—especially Black mothers, who are too often at risk.

That's why I am asking you to support SB156/HB334 and make it possible for all Marylanders with newborns to participate in Family Connects.

Family Connects is not just a program. It is a lifeline for mothers and families. It's a promise that no one has to navigate this journey alone.

Thank you

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