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**SB 156: Universal Newborn Nurse Home Visiting Services – Program Establishment and Insurance Coverage
Position: FAVORABLE
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Senate Finance Committee**

Chair Beidle, Vice Chair Hayes and members of the committee, thank you for the opportunity to provide written testimony in favor of Senate Bill 156. My name is Tara Floyd, MPH, BSN, RN, NE-BC, and I am the Associate Chief Nursing Officer at Children's National Hospital. Children's National has been serving the nation's children since 1870. Nearly 60% of our patients are residents of Maryland, and we maintain a network of community-based pediatric practices, surgery centers and regional outpatient centers in Maryland. I am also a proud Maryland resident, born and raised in the state.

Senate Bill 156 takes important strides toward better health outcomes for Maryland infants and families by establishing a standard for universal newborn nurse home visits. We know that social determinants of health, including socioeconomic status, influence infant and maternal morbidity and mortality in significant ways.¹ Importantly, Senate Bill 156 allows for equitable access to home visit services regardless of a family's ability to pay. When completing my graduate degree in public health, I learned about the positive impact that newborn nurse home visits have on the individual, on the family, and the community. When completing my nursing degree, I participated in newborn home visits, and I saw that impact firsthand. What I learned on those visits more than twenty years ago is still relevant today.

Families have questions about safe sleep practices, developmental milestones, and feeding practices. They need education about the best ways to soothe their infants, and how to identify when to call a health care provider. Families need resources for mental health, safe

¹ Dagher RK, Linares DE. A Critical Review on the Complex Interplay between Social Determinants of Health and Maternal and Infant Mortality. *Children (Basel)*. 2022 Mar 10;9(3):394. doi: 10.3390/children9030394. PMID: 35327766; PMCID: PMC8947729.

housing, injury prevention, and food assistance. For some, leaving the house will be an imposition, or impossible, just after the birth of a child. Paying out of pocket for a home nurse would likely be seen as a luxury unattainable to many. Yet nurses, with their clinical expertise and repeatedly voted the “most trusted profession,” are uniquely positioned to work with families in the home setting.

The first twelve weeks after birth are a wonderful time, but also often a time fraught with uncertainty, fears, and risk. As clinicians, we understand the consequences of late intervention as well as the benefits of early identification of concerns. In the hospital setting we see the results of needs unaddressed or a disease process caught in the late stages. This bill takes an important step toward preventing adverse outcomes and stopping short-term medical needs from becoming long-term or chronic problems.

The nursing process prioritizes evidence-based assessment and intervention as tools to improve health and well-being. Many of the interventions utilized during newborn home nurse visits are low-cost and take just minutes but will have a lasting positive impact on a generation of children. For example, a visiting nurse who weighs an infant to trend ounces lost, or who identifies the telltale skin and eye color changes indicative of jaundice—has not only supported the child in receiving the proper clinical care before the condition escalates but has potentially gained the trust of a family who might not otherwise have sought care.

As nurses, we are committed to providing each family with the support, education, and tools they need to help their children grow and thrive. A home visit shortly after birth represents the ideal setting in which to provide this. Each newborn is a new opportunity. I applaud Senator Lewis Young for introducing this important legislation, which will have life-long benefits for our state's youngest residents and their families and respectfully request a favorable report on Senate Bill 156. Thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony.

For more information, please contact:

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