

In support of SB156/HB334

Family Connects saves lives. I know that may seem extreme. It is my reality and the reality of many others who utilize the services of Family Connects.

I gave birth to my daughter, Camille, on February 7th, 2024. Having experienced a second trimester loss in 2023, I knew it was important to have someone looking out for me and looking out for my baby. I had had a high-risk pregnancy. Even with the support of a therapist, I didn't know what my mental health would look like, what my emotions would be, or how I would feel physically. I thought having a nurse visit me would be great for my well-being which in turn would be great for my child's well-being.

Lori visited my home and immediately made me feel comfortable through her conversational approach. She included my husband and at no point did I feel pressured, uncomfortable or like she was judging me. She completed a mental health screen, checked on my baby's weight and health and completed a blood pressure check on me. Lori checked my blood pressure three times during the visit which came back slightly elevated at 127/85. The nurse at my OB's office said they would not even see me for that reading but Lori was concerned. She went above and beyond to bring me a blood pressure monitor and asked me to check my blood pressure over the next couple of days. I watched my blood pressure climb over the next few days and finally, when it got to 154/101, I reached out to Lori who stated, "you need to call your OB right now." I worried that I was doing the blood pressure readings wrong, but Lori assured me that I wasn't. I called my OB who confirmed my blood pressure was 154/101 and immediately started me on medication to lower my blood pressure.

Postpartum preeclampsia, while rare, is a serious condition that can cause serious complications including seizures, brain damage, stroke, and death. As a Black woman, the risk is even higher as it affects Black woman at a rate 60% higher than white woman and is a leading cause of maternal death.

If it were not for Lori and her due diligence, I wouldn't have known about my blood pressure. I would have chalked up any symptoms to the lack of sleep I was getting and the fact that I had a newborn baby while also still raising my 5-year-old son. I could have ended up in the emergency room. I could have died.

When I say Family Connects saves lives, I am not being facetious, I am not being dramatic. They say it takes a village to raise a child. Family Connects is part of the village. They will look after you, even when no one else is.

Postpartum women do not see their OB for 6 weeks after giving birth even though complications are more likely to happen within the first weeks after giving birth. Having

Family Connect nurses who do home visits within 3 weeks bridges that gap. Even if nothing is wrong, Family Connects is peace of mind. They are a powerful resource. Whether they are providing supplies (diapers/formula), providing referrals, connecting you to resources or simply checking in, they provide an essential service which every woman regardless of race or economic status should take advantage of. As one of my fellow Family Connect mamas said, support for this vital service really is a “no-brainer.”

Please support SB156/HB334.

Thank You

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