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THE SENATE OF MARYLAND
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Testimony in Support of SB0676 - Health Care Facilities – Hospitals and Freestanding Birthing Centers – Perinatal Care Standards

Madame Chair, Mr. Vice Chair, and fellow members of the Senate Finance Committee:

SB0676 would strengthen perinatal care standards across Maryland by requiring the Maryland Department of Health (MDH) to adopt regulations ensuring that all hospitals providing obstetrical services and freestanding birthing centers meet or exceed the Maryland Perinatal System Standards.

Background

While Maryland has long recognized the importance of perinatal care, there is currently no statutory requirement ensuring that all hospitals and freestanding birthing centers adhere to the Maryland Perinatal System Standards as a condition of licensure. These standards, developed by the MDH Perinatal Clinical Advisory Committee, reflect the latest national guidelines set by the American Academy of Pediatrics and the American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists.

Solution

This bill ensures uniformity and accountability in maternal and neonatal care across all facilities, reducing disparities and improving health outcomes for families in Maryland. Maryland has already made significant strides in improving maternal and neonatal care, but gaps in standardized enforcement remain. By aligning hospital and birthing center regulations with the most current perinatal care guidelines, we can ensure that every mother and baby in Maryland receives the highest level of care, regardless of where they deliver. This bill is a proactive step in ensuring that all birthing facilities in our state provide consistent, high-quality care for mothers and newborns. This is about setting a clear, consistent expectation for perinatal care across the state.

We have worked closely with MDH and have adopted amendments to address concerns raised by the Department.

SB0676 as amended would:

- require the Maryland Department of Health (MDH), in coordination with the Maryland Institute for Emergency Medical Services System (MIEMSS) to adopt regulations

establishing minimum perinatal care standards that meet or exceed the Maryland Perinatal System Standards for:

- o each hospital that provides obstetrical services and
- o freestanding birthing centers.

Each hospital that provides obstetrical services and freestanding birthing centers must meet the standards as a condition of licensure.

Per the Fiscal Note, SB0676 would not require additional state resources.

For these reasons, I respectfully request a favorable report on SB0676.