



FREDERICK

MARYLAND

To: House Health and Government Operations Committee

Re: House Bill 334: Universal Newborn Nurse Home Visiting Services – Program Establishment and Insurance Coverage

Position: **Support**

Date: January 27, 2025

On behalf of the City of Frederick, I appreciate the opportunity to comment in support of House Bill 334.

House Bill 334 will reduce maternal health disparities, improve maternal and infant health outcomes, and reduce health care costs by supporting dedicated, sustainable funding for all Maryland families with newborns so that they may have access to the evidence-based Family Connects model.

The first few weeks after delivery of a baby are critical for both moms and newborns. Virtually all families with newborns face gaps in health care, material needs and social services to keep them healthy and well. As a result, Maryland faces large disparities in resources and outcomes which disproportionately affects Black and African American, as well as Hispanic/Latino families. These disparities occur on top of widespread poor maternal health outcomes which affect families across all socio-economic backgrounds. The Family Connects model offers Maryland a way to bridge that gap in care and offer all families with newborns support and resources during this critical postpartum time.

The Family Connects model offers all families with newborns a visit at home with a registered nurse at no charge, with the goal of improving population-level health outcomes. Based on risk and needs, the family receives personalized resources and additional targeted services. Families may request and receive up to three more visits during the 12 weeks after delivery. The universal approach – unique among home visiting models -- reduces stigma and increases participation.

The Family Connects model reduces infant emergency department visits and overnight stays by 60% within the first six months and reduces child protective services investigations by 40% for up to 5 years. The return on investment for infant health care alone is \$3.17 for every \$1 invested. Research on the Family Connects model shows that it reduces maternal health disparities for Black and African American families for maternal depression and anxiety, infant emergency care, and child protection investigations.

Beginning on January 1, 2023, Frederick Health implemented Family Connects for Frederick County residents delivering at the hospital with seed-funding from County-allocated American Rescue Plan Act

grant funds. In the first two years, the team visited almost 2640 families with newborns. 64%, or 1699, were City of Frederick residents.

City of Frederick families have reported life-saving interventions – guided by their nurse - for high blood pressure, postpartum depression, anxiety, and infant respiratory distress. They have reported increased access to mental and maternal health care and better connections to community resources for breastfeeding, nutrition, diapers, support groups, and child care.

For these reasons, I respectfully request a favorable report on HB 334.

Sincerely,

Dr. Derek Shackelford
City Council Vice President