

## THE COALITION TO PROTECT MARYLAND'S CHILDREN

*Our Mission: To combine and amplify the power of organizations and citizens working together to keep children safe from abuse and neglect. We strive to secure budgetary and public policy resources to make meaningful and measurable improvements in safety, permanence, and wellbeing.*



**HB0334 - Universal Newborn Nurse Home Visiting Services – Program  
Establishment and Insurance Coverage  
Health & Government Operations Committee  
January 29, 2025**

**Position: SUPPORT**

The Coalition to Protect Maryland’s Children is a consortium of organizations and individuals formed in 1996 who are concerned about the care of Maryland’s most vulnerable children and work together to promote meaningful child welfare reform. CPMC urges a favorable report on HB0334 - Universal Newborn Nurse Home Visiting Services – Program Establishment and Insurance Coverage.<sup>1</sup>

HB0334 seeks to require statewide implementation of a “universal” home visiting service offered to parents within 12 weeks after a newborn’s birth throughout all areas of Maryland. The legislation is calling for the use of the evidenced-based Family Connects model, currently existing in three areas of Maryland – Frederick County, Prince George’s County, and one hospital in Baltimore City. The Family Connects model offers health and wellness checks for all birth parents and newborns in a community at home with a well-trained nurse at no charge to families, with community-based referrals made for other supportive services.

Advocates for child welfare seeking to reduce instances of child maltreatment are excited by the potential of this program. Having it offered to every family with a newborn reduces any stigma that birth parents may feel about asking for help when facing post-partum, parenting, and/or baby bonding challenges by providing services and support to everyone. The legislation proposes that the first contact is made within 2 weeks after the newborn’s birth with up to three visits carried out in the home within the first 12 weeks. With each visit, the professionally trained nurse will assess and respond to issues surrounding maternal health, infant health, post-partum depression or anxiety, intimate partner violence, substance use disorder, household material supports, family and community safety, and meeting basic needs – holistically and without judgement.

A clinical longitudinal trial about this program was conducted in Durham County, North Carolina, concluding with positive results. It was found that families assigned to the Family Connects Program had 39% fewer child protective service investigations for suspected child maltreatment and 33% fewer child emergency medical care visits through the first 5 years of the child’s life. As the participants were randomly assigned, positive effects held across birth risk, child health insurance, the child’s gender, single-parent status, and racial/ethnic groups.<sup>2</sup>

We feel strongly that the Family Connects Program holds much promise for reducing maltreatment of our youngest, most vulnerable children. Maryland should make the investment to offer these services to as many families as possible. It is for these reasons that the Coalition to Protect Maryland’s Children **urges a favorable report on HB0334 - Universal Newborn Nurse Home Visiting Services – Program Establishment and Insurance Coverage.**

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<sup>1</sup> Members of CPMC represented by this written testimony include: Catholic Charities of Baltimore, Center for Hope, Child Justice, Citizens Review Board for Children, Court Appointed Special Advocates (Maryland), Court Appointed Special Advocates (Baltimore County), The Family Tree, The American Academy of Pediatricians – MD Chapter, Maryland Association of Resources for Families and Youth, National Association of Social Workers – MD Chapter, and State Council on Child Abuse & Neglect.

<sup>2</sup> JAMA Network Open. 2021;4(7):e2116024. doi:10.1001/jamanetworkopen.2021.16024