



COMMISSION FOR WOMEN COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT CLUSTER

January 27, 2025

Delegate Joseline A. Pena-Melnyk
Chair, Health and Government Operations Committee
240 Talyor House Office Building
Annapolis, Maryland 21401

Re: HB0334 (SB0156) Universal Newborn Nurse Home Visiting Services – Program Establishment and Insurance Coverage

Position: **SUPPORT**

Dear Chairperson Pena-Melnyk and Members of the House Health and Government Operations Committee,

On behalf of the Montgomery County Commission for Women, I request your support for HB0334 (Universal Newborn Nurse Home Visiting Services – Program Establishment and Insurance Coverage). The Commission for Women is charged by law to advise our County Executive, County Council, the public, and county, state, and federal government agencies on issues of concern to women. We support this bill because it will directly benefit women and infants throughout Maryland by providing them with cost-free maternal and newborn health assessments and other follow-up support during the critical first few weeks after a newborn arrives.

Many Maryland families lack access to qualified health care professionals to learn newborn care techniques and ensure their home is infant-ready. HB0334 promotes maternal and infant health by providing all families with newborns a no-cost in-home nurse visit with access to follow-up support. Families will be able to schedule a visit from a qualified nurse who will conduct health assessments of a postpartum mother and the newborn, answer questions and identify challenges that require ongoing support or referral to other services. Frederick County's successful implementation of universal newborn nurse home visits has demonstrated the measurable benefits and cost-effectiveness of this support.

Newborn nurse home visits produce both immediate and long-term benefits for infants and families. Early detection of medical conditions in infants during home visits has been shown to reduce by nearly 60% emergency medical care for newborns in their first six months of life, and another 30% reduction in their next six months. Such visits also have produced a nearly 40% reduction in adverse childhood experiences, such as child mistreatment and emergency medical care, during the first five years of a child's life.

Newborn nurse home visits provide important opportunities for mothers to ask questions of qualified health professionals to ensure they are armed with the knowledge they need to provide for their newborn. Mothers can receive screening for postpartum depression and referrals for any needed follow-up care. Universal newborn nurse home visits also present an important opportunity to prevent and address violence in the home, enhancing safety for women and newborns

Support for HB0334 will **benefit underserved communities** by:

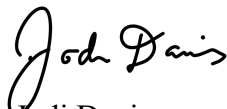
- helping women overcome challenges —especially in low-income communities and communities of color— related to affordability, transportation, access to a qualified health care professional, spousal/partner interference, and gaps in knowledge;
- increasing the likelihood that families will access this care, rather than avoid participation due to perceived stigma or risk of unwanted interventions, because the universal visits are voluntary and open to all; and
- decreasing the disproportionate rate of pregnancy-related deaths among African-American women.

Support for HB0334 **will benefit all Marylanders** by:

- providing all Maryland families with newborns – including adoptive and foster families – an opportunity for a no-cost in-home visit from a registered nurse and 12 weeks of ongoing access to a nurse
- providing an evidence-based method for improving health outcomes for women and their newborns by offering support during a critical window when such interventions can be most impactful
- promoting conditions conducive to healthy, positive and safe parenting, which will allow insurers and the State of Maryland to see reductions in longer term costs.

The Commission's strategic priorities include advocating for laws that enhance access to health care for low-income women. This bill furthers our goals, and we urge this Committee's support for HB0344.

Respectfully,



Jodi Danis
Commissioner
Montgomery County Commission for Women