



The Family Tree

A LifeBridge Health Group | **Raising families up.**

Date: January 29, 2025

To: Chair Pena-Melnyk, -Vice Chair Cullison, and the Health and Government Operations Committee

Reference: House Bill 334, Universal Newborn Nurse Home Visiting Services-Program Establishment and Insurance Coverage

Position: Letter of Support

Dear Chair Pena-Melnyk, -Vice Chair Cullison, and the Health and Government Operations Committee:

On behalf of The Family Tree, we appreciate the opportunity to comment on and express wholehearted support for House Bill 334. The Family Tree is a nonprofit organization that leads Maryland in the prevention of child abuse and neglect. As such, we are dedicated to supporting families and individuals through various programs and services that promote child safety and well-being, stability, and growth. We focus on enhancing the quality of life for families via preventive measures, education, and resources that empower parents and children alike. The Family Tree offers family support services that address a wide range of issues including maternal health, child maltreatment, child safety and development, and trauma informed care. Through parenting classes, home visiting programs, case management, and resource and referral to community resources; families receive the assistance they need to navigate challenges and build a stronger foundation for the future.

The Family Tree strongly supports House Bill 334 - Universal Newborn Nurse Home Visiting Services-Program Establishment and Insurance Coverage as amended by the sponsor. The passing of this legislation would create a workgroup to explore how to provide all families with support during the early stages of parenthood when it is needed most. In-home visits from trained nurses address post-natal maternal health factors such as hypertension, diabetes, and postpartum depression. Issues such as infant mortality are also addressed by way of well-baby health checkups, safety assessments, and safe sleep education.

We look forward to the study exploring key benefits of the universal program include:

Enhanced Child Health and Well-being:

- Families and their newborns will receive health screenings to address issues that arise between hospital discharge and scheduled pediatric well child visits.
- Parents receive education on nutrition, safe sleep practices, and vaccination schedules, promoting healthier lifestyles from the very beginning.



The Family Tree

A LifeBridge Health Group | **Raising families up.**

- Support for maternal mental health:
 - Families are universally assessed for postpartum depression, substance use, parental emotional support, and history of parenting difficulties.
 - Families receive emotional support from trained professionals to help cope with the challenges of new parenthood which includes referrals to mental health resources when needed.
- Long term costs benefits
 - By addressing issues early, the program helps prevent more serious challenges later on, reducing healthcare costs and the need for services in the future.
 - Investing in prevention based early intervention programs has long-term societal benefits. Most importantly, it helps Maryland's children while promoting healthier communities, thus reducing the burden on public resources.

The Family Tree began implementing Family Connects in 2016. Family Connects is a universal home visiting program that provides nurse home visits to all families within a designated geographical area. Over the years it has become evident that the implementation of universal home visits is beneficial as it allows all families to receive support regardless of race, income, or social economic status.

Moreover, the Family Connects model has demonstrated numerous favorable results with, for example, fewer infant emergency room and pediatric visits for injuries and illnesses and participating mothers are less likely to experience anxiety and depression.

For all the above stated reasons, we request that the committee support House Bill 334, Universal Newborn Nurse Home Visiting Services-Program Establishment and Insurance Coverage as amended by the sponsor.

For more information, please contact:

Stacey Brown, M.Ed. LCPC

Executive Director, The Family Tree

sbrown@familytreemd.org

Phone: 410-889-2300