

SUPPORT

UNIVERSAL NEWBORN NURSE HOME VISITING SERVICES –

HB 334

PROGRAM ESTABLISHMENT AND INSURANCE COVERAGE

January 29, 2025

Former Frederick County Executive Jan Gardner urges your SUPPORT/FAVORABLE RECOMMENDATION for HB 334 to establish universal newborn nurse home visiting services and to establish insurance coverage.

As Frederick County Executive, I provided funding for the initial 4 years of the Family Connects Program – an evidence based, universal nurse home visiting program for all birthing parents in Frederick County. I initiated this program utilizing federal ARPA dollars because I wanted to use a portion of these funds to strengthen families, address maternal and infant health disparities, and to put our community in a better place than pre-COVID. I knew there would be a benefit to collecting data on the health outcomes and cost savings and that there were options that could be pursued for ongoing funding. This program garnered the bi-partisan support of the county council.

The existence of over 10 years of data from Family Connects through Duke University was convincing. Evidence demonstrates a reduction in infant emergency department visits and overnight stays, a reduction in maternal depression and anxiety, a reduction in child protective services investigations, a reduction in racial health disparities, as well as stronger families. And, the program generates health care cost savings to insurance providers and reduces the strain on our health care system. There is already preliminary data in Frederick County that demonstrates a reduction in postpartum health care costs both by patient and by visit. Our nurses have found instances that required immediate follow-up care for either the mother or an infant preventing what could otherwise be a catastrophic outcome.

Families can have up to 3 postpartum home visits and can have a warm handoff to other resources they may need which could include help with breastfeeding, assistance with childcare, participation in WIC, or referrals for mental health, Judy Centers, or for formula and diapers.

Smaller Family Connects programs exist in Baltimore City and Prince George's County.

This program received the support of then county council member Jessica Fitzwater and that support continues as a priority under her administration.

I urge your FAVORABLE recommendation for HB 334.

Submitted by: Jan H. Gardner, 6102 Fieldcrest Dr. Frederick MD; janhgardner@gmail.com