

January 27, 2025

Dear Distinguished Members of the Maryland General Assembly,

As a Board-certified Obstetrician and Gynecologist with experience in clinical practice and community health initiatives I am writing to express my strong support for SB156/HB334, the *Universal Newborn Nurse Home Visiting Services* bill, which supports the statewide implementation an evidence-based universal nurse and newborn home visiting service.

Throughout my career, I have been deeply engaged in improving maternal health outcomes in our communities. My work has included organizing health fairs for the underserved, facilitating baby showers in immigrant neighborhoods, and teaching in a Community Health Worker certification program. I have led national webinars on critical maternal health topics and served on the County's local health improvement plan committee that addressed maternal health disparities. Additionally, as a consultant to the Frederick County Family Connects program, I have witnessed firsthand how comprehensive maternal and newborn support services transform families.

Given all of my experience, I am glad to see that the nurse newborn home visiting program takes a universal approach to supporting new families. This inclusive model offers services to everyone while addressing maternal health disparities. By providing customized care to each and every family, the program effectively meets the diverse needs of the participants. Experience has shown that every family has some type of need, though they may not recognize it until engaging with a skilled nurse. Through these vital encounters in the Frederick County program, nurses have identified many situations requiring urgent intervention. These include new-onset maternal blood pressure problems, significant lactation challenges, and critical material needs. Nurses have also addressed behavioral health concerns such as depression and anxiety, environmental safety risks, and newborn health issues.

Even experienced mothers have reported that they benefited from the extra support and were grateful to learn about the latest information and resources. By providing every family with a nurse visit and tailoring the care and resources to each family's specific needs, the program ensures equitable access to care while acknowledging that different families require various levels and types of support. It makes sense.

The program continues to provide comprehensive support through post-visit calls and easy access to nurses after the initial visit and throughout the 12-week service provision period when more visits can be provided if necessary. Nurses focus on connecting families to needed community resources. This creates a vital bridge between families and existing support services. This approach has resulted in consistently remarkable satisfaction rates of 99% among participating families.

Let me share an example of the program's potential long-term positive impact through just one intervention which is lactation support. Research demonstrates that women who breastfeed for six months or longer experience reduced risks of:

- Breast and ovarian cancer, diabetes, and cardiovascular disease
- Depression and hypertension.

Their infants likewise gain substantial lifelong health benefits, to include:

- Enhanced immune system function and reduced risk of obesity
- Lower incidence of respiratory infections and sudden infant death syndrome
- Reduced rates of allergic conditions, including asthma
- Decreased risk of diabetes and childhood leukemia

Additionally, successful breastfeeding provides significant financial benefits for families while maternal-infant bonds continue to develop. With the high cost of formula putting a strain on many household budgets, the ability to breastfeed can result in substantial savings. This economic benefit is particularly impactful for families facing financial challenges, making the lactation support provided through the universal nurse-newborn visit an important tool for promoting both health equity and financial stability. Families who do not have access to a nurse home visit or this type of support may not breastfeed, or not breastfeed as long, and therefore may not experience the same positive outcomes or benefits.

This represents just one example of the many ways evidence-based nurse-newborn home visits improve outcomes and generate cost savings. The program creates positive impacts across multiple domains - for families, healthcare systems, and entire communities. Each nurse intervention has the potential to prevent costly complications, reduce emergency room visits, strengthen family well-being, and promote healthier communities. The cumulative effect of these various interventions creates substantial value for Maryland's healthcare system and economy.

As a healthcare provider who has dedicated my career to improving maternal health outcomes, I am comfortable in stating that this initiative addresses a critical gap in our healthcare system. The postpartum period, often referred to as the "fourth trimester," is a crucial time when families need support the most, yet it is when they often feel the most isolated and vulnerable.

The statewide implementation of a universal nurse newborn home visiting service would represent a significant step forward. It would address maternal health disparities and ensure that every Maryland family has access to this vital support. When we support families during this critical period, we strengthen our communities and create a foundation for better health outcomes that can last a lifetime.

Again, I strongly urge you to support this bill and make this evidence-based program available to all Maryland families. The potential for transformational change in maternal and infant health outcomes cannot be overstated. This investment in our families is an investment in Maryland's future.

Thank you for your consideration of this important legislation.

Sincerely,



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