



## MARYLAND LEGISLATIVE LATINO CAUCUS

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TO: Delegate Joseline A. Pena-Melnyk, Chair  
Delegate Bonnie Cullison, Vice Chair  
Health and Government Operations Committee Members

FROM: Maryland Legislative Latino Caucus

DATE: January 29, 2025

RE: HB334 – Universal Newborn Nurse Home Visiting Services –  
Program Establishment and Insurance Coverage

### **The MLLC supports HB334 – Universal Newborn Nurse Home Visiting Services – Program Establishment and Insurance Coverage**

The MLLC is a bipartisan group of Senators and Delegates committed to supporting legislation that improves the lives of Latinos throughout our state. The MLLC is a crucial voice in the development of public policy that uplifts the Latino community and benefits the state of Maryland. Thank you for allowing us the opportunity to express our support of HB334.

In 2024, the maternal mortality rate in Maryland was 21.3 per 100k births.<sup>1</sup> The infant mortality rate in Maryland was 6 per 1000 births as of 2022. Minority women and their infants suffer maternal and infant mortality in greater numbers and disproportionately experience negative health outcomes in the first weeks and months following delivery. For example, the infant mortality rate for White women in the state is 3.8 per 1000 births compared to 5.1 per 1000 births for Hispanic citizens and 9.6 per 1000 births for Black citizens.<sup>2</sup>

Beginning in 2023, Frederick County established their Family Connects program to connect families with newborns with postpartum home nurse visits. Family Connects visited 2,318 families between January 1, 2023 and September 20, 2024.<sup>3</sup> During these at-home visits, nurses provide a full newborn assessment and a health assessment of the birthing parent.<sup>4</sup> The program shows fewer Emergency Department visits following delivery, fewer re-admits, and has provided early identification of infant respiratory distress, postpartum preeclampsia, postpartum depression, and infected incisions. It has also identified wrap-around services available but not utilized.<sup>5</sup>

Using Frederick County's Family Connects program as an example, this bill requires the Maryland Department of Health to establish a universal newborn nurse home visiting services program for all families with a newborn up to 12 weeks old. The bill requires the Department of Health to establish rules for the program, specifically as it relates to community leads tasked with running the program. Insurers, nonprofit health service plans, and health maintenance organizations are required to cover

<sup>1</sup> [2024 March of Dimes Report Card for Maryland](#)

<sup>2</sup> Ibid

<sup>3</sup> [Proposed state bill would expand at-home visiting program for newborns, parents statewide](#)

<sup>4</sup> [At Home Newborn Visit](#)

<sup>5</sup> ['Made me feel normal!': Frederick County parents share the impact of at-home nurse visits](#)

newborn nurse home visits and must notify enrollees of the program once a newborn is added onto the plan. This program will help improve postpartum health outcomes for both the infant and birthing parents, specifically for minority and low-income families who are disproportionately impacted by postpartum health complications and infant and maternal mortality.

For these reasons, the Maryland Legislative Latino Caucus respectfully requests a favorable report on HB334.