



Maryland
Hospital Association

Senate Bill 156 - Universal Newborn Nurse Home Visiting Services - Program Establishment and Insurance Coverage

Position: *Support*
January 29, 2025
Senate Finance Committee

MHA Support

On behalf of the Maryland Hospital Association's (MHA) member hospitals and health systems, we appreciate the opportunity to comment in support of Senate Bill 156, which creates a voluntary statewide Universal Newborn Nurse Home Visiting program as a standard health care benefit in Maryland.

The proposed program offers families the opportunity to receive visits from a licensed registered nurse after the birth or adoption of their baby. During these in-person or virtual visits, nurses assess the baby's development, identify services or resources the family may need, and refer them to additional programs and social support. Families may be eligible for up to four visits within the first 12 weeks of the baby's life.

Newborn nurse home visiting programs provide families of newborns with personalized, non-stigmatizing, comprehensive services through a care system designed to enhance perinatal health outcomes. They emphasize evidence-based practices to improve overall health and wellness. Key focus areas include positive parenting, economic self-sufficiency, child development, and reducing child maltreatment and family violence.

Statewide models, such as in Oregon, and local initiatives like Frederick Health's Family Connect Pilot Program and LifeBridge Health's Family Tree show promising results.

In 2023, data from Frederick Health's Family Connect Pilot Program¹ showed improvements including:

- Decreased emergency department visits for new mothers and babies
- Diminished health disparities for Black families
- Effective identification of undiagnosed postpartum depression or anxiety and preeclampsia
- Successful connections for families to wrap-around services
- Improved rates of breastfeeding, childhood immunizations, and overall better maternal and infant health outcomes

¹ Newborn Visits for All Families to Reduce Racial Disparities and Improve Maternal and Child Health Outcomes: An Overview of the Family Connects Model & Sites in Maryland

Establishing this program as a universal standard health care benefit ensures it has a broad reach to families across all income, insurance, and education levels. Payers must cover and reimburse providers for the full cost of delivering services under the program. They are also prohibited from imposing copayments, coinsurance, or deductibles for these services. Additionally, they must inform the insured or enrolled individuals about the program whenever newborn coverage is added.

The framework for this program includes oversight and review. The Maryland Department of Health (MDH) and the Maryland Insurance Administration (MIA) are required to develop regulations that set the criteria for covered services, and the amount and method of reimbursement. Additionally, insurers must report data on the claims submitted for these services to MDH, so the department can effectively and comprehensively monitor care.

Newborn nurse home visiting programs provide important care and services to new parents and their babies—improving perinatal health outcomes. For these reasons, we request a favorable report on SB 156.

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