



January 25, 2007

Dear Representative Peggy Sayers;
Public Health Committee

I have just learned that the Department of Public Health is planning a significant change in its approach to fetal and infant mortality in Connecticut. I understand that as of June 30, 2006, DPH will terminate its support of community-based programs and instead pursue a statewide surveillance process.

I have been a key member of the Windham Fetal and Infant Mortality Review (FIMR) program since its inception in 1998, and am gravely concerned about losing this important community initiative. The FIMR model has been very beneficial to the Windham community, and I am concerned about the potential loss of this important program.

Windham is a community with significant social, economic and health challenges. Our rates of infant and fetal mortality, teen pregnancy, low birth weights and related indicators consistently rank among the highest in the state. These are problems that must be addressed at the community *and* state levels. The support of DPH for our FIMR initiative has enabled us to continually monitor our birth outcomes and service systems; identify and respond to gaps in service; and work to implement improvements.

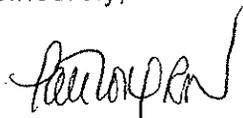
The network established and coordinated through FIMR is the primary mechanism we have in Windham to monitor and address perinatal service issues. Since FIMR began in 1998, our Case Review and Community Action Teams have accomplished a great deal. For example:

- Established protocol for scheduling postpartum visiting nurse home visits for all mothers following an infant or fetal loss
- Bereavement Faith Based support services for both Spanish-speaking and English-Speaking families
- Grand Rounds on Chorioamnionitis and Pre-term labor
- Grand Rounds on pregnancy and substance abuse- Funding from March of Dimes
- Linked with Oral Health Collaborative, "Save The Smiles" to raise awareness of the need for dental services for pregnant women and their children
- STD information was sent to all providers to requesting that all young people are screened regardless of symptoms
- A grant was secured to allow us to teach women about healthy pregnancies and community services via "Healthy Pregnancy Parties"

A suspension of this initiative will undoubtedly result in a reversal of the progress made over the last eight years. While there is no question that the issue of fetal and infant mortality needs to be approached on a statewide basis, I believe it would be a great loss when DPH abandons support of these community networks. The relatively few dollars invested in FIMR have produced tangible improvements in local services.

I support the continuation of FIMR and ask the legislature to provide the resources to allow this program to do its valuable work.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Pati Long', written in a cursive style.

Pati Long, RN, BSN, Clinical II, FIMR Committee Member
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