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**Education Committee
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John Bailey, Government Relations Director
American Heart Association**

Support for S.B. 56: An Act Concerning Pulse Oximetry Screening for Newborn Infants

Good morning Senator Gerratana, Representative Ritter, and member of the Public Health committee.

My name is John Bailey, State Director of Government Relations for the American Heart Association, and I am here today to testify in support of S.B. 56: An Act Concerning Pulse Oximetry Screening for Newborn Infants.

Nearly one in three infants who die from birth defects has a heart defect. We could potentially save these tiny lives if more emphasis is placed on assuring newborns are appropriately screened for heart defects before being discharged from the hospital.

Congenital heart defects (CHDs) are structural abnormalities of the heart that are present at birth; CHDs range in severity from simple problems such as holes between chambers of the heart, to severe malformations, such as the complete absence of one or more chambers or valves; some critical CHDs can cause severe and life-threatening symptoms which require intervention within the first days of life.

The pulse oximetry test, or pulse ox, consists of sensors placed on a baby's hand and foot to check blood oxygen levels. If their levels are too low, additional tests are conducted to detect critical or possibly life-threatening heart defects that might otherwise be missed. With congenital heart defects considered to be the leading cause of birth-defect related deaths in the U.S., new research suggests wider use of pulse ox screening could help identify more than 90 percent of heart defects.

U.S. Secretary of Health and Human Services Kathleen Sebelius has suggested that critical congenital heart defects screening be added to the "Recommended Uniform Screening Panel" for newborns before they are released from a hospital or birthing facility. To achieve this goal, the American Heart Association and volunteers are working in states across the country to enact pulse ox screening policies that will allow babies with heart defects to live longer and fuller lives. Thanks to the work of board coalitions, New Jersey, Maryland and Indiana have all recently passed laws requiring newborns to have pulse ox screenings prior to being discharged from the hospital. In New Jersey, just hours after their law took effect; a newborn's life was saved.

Let's make Connecticut the next state to enact this lifesaving legislation.

Thank you for your time.