



Raising hope, one and a half hearts at a time

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Public Health Committee

Legislative Office Building, Room 3000

Hartford, CT 06106

RE: Support for Bill #RHB 56

Dear Public Health Committee:

I write this letter to you as both a mother and a Registered Nurse of over 20 years. My youngest of three sons, Matthew, was born with a very serious Congenital Heart Defect called 'Hypoplastic Right Heart Syndrome'. We were extremely fortunate that Matthew's condition was diagnosed in utero, enabling him to be born at Columbia Presbyterian Hospital in New York. He has undergone three open-heart surgeries and three cardiac cath in his short life of three and a half years. He currently takes eight doses of medicine a day and is doing very well in big part to the excellent team of doctors and nurses and his early diagnosis.

Congenital Heart Defects (CHD) is the #1 Birth Defect affecting 40,000 babies annually. Half of the babies with CHD are diagnosed in utero, but the other half can go undiagnosed for days, weeks, months and sometimes years, with dire consequences. In fact, at this very moment, babies are being discharged from hospitals with a hidden disease that could take their lives.

At best, the missed diagnosis of newborns with CHD will result in surgical compromise, neurological impairment, developmental delay, organ failure, and long-term feeding issues...all at huge costs to the healthcare system. However, there is solution available for this problem; a simple Pulse Oximetry Test, which costs approximately \$1, is a cost-effective, non-invasive means of testing for CHD.

We all know Pulse Oximetry is considered the 5th vital sign. It's routinely done on any adult with the slightest ailment or injury, including mothers during labor and delivery. Remarkably, their babies, who just ventured into this world and are breathing oxygen for the first time ever, are not tested before discharge. Physicians, hospitals, and advocates clearly understand the importance of early detection of newborn diseases and disorders in saving lives and reducing healthcare cost burdens associated with late diagnosis. This is also a huge issue for our rural and underserved populations, who will continue to fall through the cracks, if this simple evaluation does not become a standard of care for all newborns.

I urge you all to leverage your leadership and expertise in public health to support this important Bill. Bill # RHB 56, requiring Pulse Oximetry testing for everyone newborn, will save lives, it is that simple!! Please let Connecticut join New Jersey and Indiana, as the current states with this important law and the many other states moving quickly to mandate this simple test to benefit newborns throughout the United States.

In addition, I also ask that you consider amending the wording in the Bill to cover 'Any & All Screening for Critical Congenital Heart Defects'. As technology advances, we can continue to screen effectively without having to re-introduce legislation to cover such advancements.

Yours in appreciation,

Marie Hatcher RN