

DANBURY HOSPITAL

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March 1, 2012

Public Health Committee
Legislative Office Building, Room 3000
Hartford, Ct. 06106

Re: Support for Bill #RHB 56

Dear Public Health Committee,

I am the Director of Patient Care Services for the Women's and Children's Service Lines at Danbury Hospital, in Danbury Connecticut. I have been a practicing Registered Nurse for over 30 years, and have dedicated my entire career to the care of expectant and new mothers, babies and children, in pediatric units, pediatric and neonatal intensive care units, pediatric home care, and family birthing centers.

As a pediatric nurse, I have cared for many children who have undergone cardiac surgery. Often, they go into surgery extremely compromised from the symptoms caused by their disease, which makes them a poor surgical risk, setting them up for long term complications, and potentially death. Early diagnosis of congenital heart disease with a simple screening test allows for intervention and treatment at a time when an infant is seemingly well, increasing their chances for a successful surgical intervention.

A few months ago, I became aware of a simple screening test for all newborns, which if done in the hospital before the infant goes home to their family, can save the lives of infants and children. This screening test, done by measuring the oxygen level in an infant's blood by applying a probe to a hand and a foot, takes only a few minutes, and costs less than a cup of coffee. This simple procedure can detect a heart defect that if missed, can lead to an infant dying at home, or coming back to the hospital, critically ill and fighting for his or her life.

Today I am asking that you support Bill # RHB 56, which would mandate newborn pulse oximetry screening for congenital heart disease in every hospital in Connecticut. I confess that we at Danbury plan on implementing this test without a mandate, because the nurses and doctors on our staff see this as a simple just do it, because it is simply the right thing to do. Mandating this screening test will assure that every hospital in Connecticut is doing the right thing for the most vulnerable members of our communities. Saving a child's life and the devastation to families that accompany the death of a child, is well worth implementing this one simple measure.

Sincerely,

Maryalice Cullen, RN
Director of Patient Care Services
Women's and Children's Service Lines