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Member of the CT House of Representatives, 1993-2015
95 South Rd
Bolton, CT 06043

February 25, 2015
GAE Committee Public Hearing

HB5793 Establishing a Safe Havens Day in CT

Good afternoon Chairmen, Ranking members and members of the committee:

Since April is the month dedicated to child abuse prevention, please consider **establishing April 2nd** as Safe Haven Day in Connecticut each year.

As an initial sponsor of the Safe Havens law, I have tracked the important success rate in our state protecting the newborn and mother alike, in the all-important effort to stop infant abandonment or worse. Since 2000, twenty four people have made the choice to save a baby's life, so many thought it was working well.

Until this year.

The tragic infanticide by a young mother in East Hartford made many aware that there is a need for a renewed effort to get out the word about Connecticut's Safe Haven's law to the successive generations of young people in our state.

- The law gives a person in distress who has a newborn a very important option. If they cannot take care of the baby under 30 days old, they may take the child to a hospital emergency room.
- They do not have to answer any questions.
- Their anonymity is held at the hospital.
- The baby's health and the mother's, if necessary, are tended to.
- The baby is placed in a pre-approved adoptive home.
- The adult is given a matching wrist-band to the infant and may decide within the next 30 days to come back and begin the process of retrieving the baby.

The law only works when someone knows what it is.
Let's share this law.

The private/public partnership of Safe Haven's Working Group, created last September, is asking that you support this initiative before your committee. By creating a Safe Haven's Day in Connecticut, we have the opportunity to put a focus on this important law, for others to share and learn what the law is. Knowledge will save not only one but two lives each time this important, practical emergency law is invoked.

THE STATE OF TEXAS,

COUNTY OF _____

Know all men by these presents,

that _____

of the County of _____ State of Texas

do hereby certify that _____

is the true and correct copy of _____

as the same appears from the _____

_____ of _____

_____ of _____

_____ of _____

MANCHESTER

Warrant: Newborn Died Of Asphyxia

Police Found Baby In Garbage Bin

BY HILDA MUÑOZ
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MANCHESTER - Eighteen-year-old Geralyz Sotomayor-Cruz kept her pregnancy a secret from her family because she was afraid of how her strict mother would react, according to a warrant for her arrest.

She gave birth to a boy Aug. 12 in the bathroom of her Tolland Street home and put him in a plastic trash bag, which she carried to a garbage bin outside the house. She insisted that he wasn't moving or breathing when he was born, the warrant says.

But an autopsy showed that the newborn had been alive at birth. The medical examiner's office determined he died of asphyxia and ruled the death a homicide.

East Hartford police, citing the medical examiner's findings and Sotomayor-Cruz's indifference to the child's life, obtained an arrest warrant Thursday. She was arraigned Friday on charges of first-degree manslaughter, first-degree assault, risk of injury to a minor and concealment of delivery.

Her public defender said Sotomayor-Cruz, an East Hartford High School graduate and a full-time college student, has no prior criminal or disciplinary history. She asked that her client be released on a promise to appear.

The judge kept bail set at \$500,000 and transferred the case to Part A court in Hartford, where more serious cases are handled. Sotomayor-Cruz is scheduled to appear there on Oct. 28.

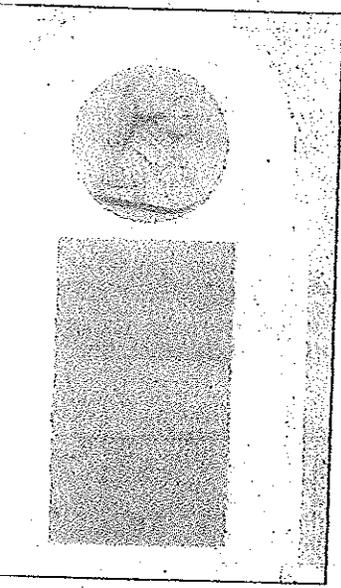
After giving birth, Sotomayor-Cruz went to Connecticut Children's Medical Center, where exams sug-

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STEPHEN DUNN | SDUNN@COURANT.COM



OVER →

Newborn

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gested she'd recently had a full-term baby. She denied having been pregnant, but then said she had a miscarriage five months prior, the warrant says.

The doctors called East Hartford police, who dispatched officers to Sotomayor-Cruz's home. The officers found bloodstains on the bathroom floor and a bloody tissue inside the bathroom trash can. They searched a garbage bin outside the house and found the plastic bag with the newborn, the warrant says.

He was pronounced dead at the scene.

Sotomayor-Cruz initially told officers she didn't know she was pregnant until Aug. 12 when she woke up with abdominal pain and gave birth while seated on the toilet.

Her medical records indicate otherwise, the warrant says.

The records show that Sotomayor-Cruz was aware of the pregnancy in January of 2014. A doctor at CCMC tried getting her to return to the hospital for further treatment, but Sotomayor-Cruz said a pregnancy test by the high school nurse and a blood test at Planned Parenthood showed she was not pregnant.

She went to CCMC in March when an ultrasound confirmed the pregnancy, the warrant says. She told the doctor she wanted to hold off on telling her family until after she turned 18.

Sotomayor-Cruz kept the pregnancy a secret from her family, but discussed it on her Facebook account and with the boy's father, the warrant says. Denis Castillo, her boyfriend for two years, told police Sotomayor-Cruz was afraid of telling her mother.

She sent him a message online the afternoon of Aug. 12, saying she was scared because she was bleeding. Castillo told her to seek help from her mother or at the hospital. About an hour later, she sent him a picture of herself at the hospital.

Sotomayor-Cruz eventually admitted that she knew she had been pregnant, but said she lost the baby in March. When officers said the miscarriage was not documented in her medical history, she said she assumed she miscarried because she was losing weight, she menstruated monthly and she couldn't feel the baby moving.

She insisted that she did not know she was in labor until the day of the incident, the warrant said.

Mailer

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