

54 Meadow Street, 9<sup>th</sup> Floor • New Haven, Connecticut 06519 • 203-946-6999

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Justin Elicker, Mayor • Maritza Bond, MPH, Director of Health

TESTIMONY OF MARITZA BOND SUBMITTED TO THE PUBLIC HEALTH COMMITTEE  
ON MARCH 17, 2023

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***S.B. No 986 – AN ACT PROTECTING MATERNAL HEALTH***

Co-Chairs, Ranking Members, and members of the Committee, I, Maritza Bond, Director of Health for the City of New Haven submit this testimony in **support** of the Senate Bill 986.

I have dedicated the past twenty-two years working to protect the health and wellbeing of Connecticut residents and have served as the Health Director of the City of New Haven for the past three years. I am in full support of this bill to protect maternal health. I am in particularly in strong support of Section 12 addressing the creation of a statewide program for universal nurse home visiting to support new mothers and their infants. In New Haven, there are major disparities in infant mortality rates by race (DataHaven, 2023). The New Haven infant mortality rate for Black babies is 11.3 deaths per 1,000 live births compared to 4.0 for white babies. New Haven babies are also more likely to have a low birth weight compared to the Connecticut average (9.0 percent vs. 7.8 percent). There are also significant racial disparities in birth weight in New Haven – low birth weights are 1.7 times more likely for Black babies than white babies (11.2 percent compared to 6.6 percent) (DataHaven, 2023). We need to do more to protect the lives and wellbeing of infants and mothers. Adopting best practice models can serve as pathway to supporting maternal health.

The Family Connects model, piloted in Bridgeport, is an evidence-based home visiting program that enhances maternal and child health and well-being and reduces rates of child abuse and neglect. In a randomized controlled trial, results have shown that there were 50% fewer emergency room visits and hospital overnight stays in the first year of life, mothers reported reduced postpartum clinical anxiety, and expressed increased responsibility to their infants. Home visiting programs are effective tools in improving maternal and infant health and I strongly support the creation of a universal home visiting program as outlined in Section 12.

This bill is critical to protecting the health of mothers and infants and I urge you to pass it.

**CITY OF NEW HAVEN**  
Health Department



Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "M. Bond", is positioned above the printed name.

Maritza Bond, MPH  
Director of Health