

HOUSE BILL 180 COVERAGE OF DONOR MILK - INFANT SURVIVAL ACT

Background

HB 180 - *Coverage of Donor Breast Milk - Infant Survival Act* will help save lives of the most vulnerable infants – those infants in the Neonatal Intensive Care Unit (NICU) who need breast milk from a donor bank:

- The bill says that Medicaid should cover the cost of donor breast milk for the sickest babies.
- The bill would help address Maryland's high infant mortality rate. Maryland is ranked 39th in the US, with significantly higher infant mortality rates for non-whites (DHMH).
- As donor breast milk is only about \$4.50 an ounce, it is an inexpensive way to improve the health outcomes of infants – much less expensive than any pharmaceutical treatments.

Why Donor Breast Milk is Life-Saving

- ***Human milk is life-saving to premature infants!*** For many reasons, some mothers of very low birth weight (VLBW) infants are not able to express sufficient amounts of their own breast milk.
- The life-saving benefits of human milk (breast milk) for very-low-birth-weight babies (VLBW) have been established in many studies. Among other things, the incidence of NEC is reduced in VLBW babies fed human milk.
- *Necrotizing enterocolitis (NEC)* is a devastating intestinal disease that affects premature infants. NEC occurs in only 1 in 2000 to 4000 births, or 1 to 5% of NICU admissions. *However, 10% of babies born weighing less than 1500 grams will develop NEC, and it has a mortality of up to 25%!*
- One recent study of 207 VLBW infants showed a 50% reduction in NEC and an almost 90% reduction in NEC requiring surgical intervention in infants receiving human milk. (Sullivan, S. et al J. Pediatrics, 2010;156:562-7.e1)
- Milk from a donor bank is safe. The Human Milk Banking Association of North America ensures quality control of donor human milk banking among member banks through adherence to mandatory guidelines and inspections.
<http://HMBABA.org>

Why HB 180 Will Save Money for Maryland

- It is estimated that a VLBW infant who develops NEC can extend NICU stays by 22 to 50 days Basquera, JA et al Pediatrics. 109(3) March 2002;423-428.)
- A day in the NICU costs about \$3,500 vs about \$30 per day to cover donor breast milk during the first months of life .