



Massachusetts Catholic Conference
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LEGISLATIVE TESTIMONY

To: Joint Committee on Children, Families, and Persons with Disability

From: James F. Driscoll, Esq., Executive Director

Re: House Bill 108, “An Act relative to the safe placement of newborn infants” and House Bill 114, “An Act to increase the safety of newborns.”

Date: July 21, 2015

The Massachusetts Catholic Conference (“MCC”) respectfully submits this testimony in support of House Bill 108, “An act relative to the safe placement of newborn infants” and House Bill 114, “An Act to increase the safety of newborns.”

Since its inception in 2004, the Baby Safe Haven law has provided a much needed resource for individuals who, for whatever personal reasons, feel they cannot properly care for a newborn infant. As of the end of 2010, fifteen babies have been surrendered to local hospitals, police, or fire stations in the Commonwealth of Massachusetts. Although comprehensive statistics on the safe placement of newborn infants under the “Safe Haven” statute are difficult to find, largely due to privacy concerns, it is certain that the law that is in effect is working well and for its intended purposes.

Nonetheless, tragedy still occurs. In the fall of 2010, a teenager was arrested in East Boston for allegedly throwing her newborn baby boy out a second floor window and into the street.¹ Allowing 911 responders to be included in the list of safe haven sites could potentially prevent tragedies such as these.

This simple amendment to the Baby Safe Haven statute would align Massachusetts with New Hampshire and Vermont, who amended their safe haven statutes in 2003 and 2005, respectively.² It would bring the “safe haven” to the infant when the infant is not or cannot be brought to the “safe haven.” House Bill 108 and House Bill 114 will provide for an expanded safety net beyond the current boundaries of a fixed location. It is a natural progression in and extension of a program that has proven to be successful in saving lives.

For the aforementioned reasons, the Massachusetts Catholic Conference urges the committee to give House Bill 108 and House Bill 114 a favorable report.

The Massachusetts Catholic Conference is the public policy office of the Roman Catholic Bishops in the Commonwealth, representing the Archdiocese of Boston and the Dioceses of Fall River, Springfield, and Worcester.

¹ “Incident could lead to amendment to Safe Haven law.” East Boston Times-Free Press, November 9, 2010. <http://www.eastietimes.com/2010/11/09/incident-could-lead-to-amendment-to-safe-havenlaw/>

² *Id.*