



Testimony Concerning SB 777
“Public Health – Maryland Prenatal and Infant Care Grant Program Fund”
Submitted to the Senate Budget & Taxation Committee
February 24, 2021

Position: Support

Maryland Family Network (MFN) strongly supports SB 777, which would expand the purposes and funding for a grant program focused on prenatal services for low-income pregnant women as well as care for postpartum women and their children from birth to age three.

MFN has worked since 1945 to improve the availability and quality of child care and other supports for children and families in Maryland. As the largest and oldest statewide child advocacy organization in Maryland, MFN is strongly committed to ensuring the health and well-being of children across our state.

An existing grant program, established by statute in 2018, seeks to improve the coordination of services to at-risk pregnant women and new mothers, services that can prove challenging from both a programmatic and funding standpoint. Care coordination links pregnant women to services that support a healthy pregnancy with the goal of reducing poor birth outcomes, such as premature birth, low birth weight, and infant mortality. After the child’s birth, care coordination identifies and integrates supports for both mother and baby, which can range from home visiting and evaluation for maternal depression to intervention related to developmental delays and linkages to insurance and nutrition programs.

And yet we know that serious gaps exist not only in the coordination but also the provision of services. Maryland experiences a high number of births to Medicaid-eligible mothers, and their circumstances pose significant risks for both mother and child. While retaining the existing program’s focus on this underserved population, SB 777 would expand the potential uses of the grant funds, broaden the types of health providers eligible to receive grants, and ensure much more robust funding on an annual basis. Accountability is woven into the provisions of the legislation.

To help ensure healthy pregnancies and healthy babies for some of our most vulnerable Marylanders, MFN urges your favorable consideration of SB 777.