



City of Duluth - Police Department

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DATE: 2/5/2025

SUBJECT: Statement on Safe Haven Incident

BY: Mattie Hjelseth, Duluth Police Department Public Information Officer

NATURE OF INCIDENT:

CASE NO.:

INCIDENT DATE:

INCIDENT TIME:

INCIDENT LOCATION:

Statement on Safe Haven Incident

Below is a brief statement Chief Mike Ceynowa gave regarding the approximately one week old infant that was dropped off at Safe Haven Shelter on Tuesday, January 21. Reports in the media do not portray the actual events nor the Duluth Police Department's investigative intent accurately regarding this case.

Upon responding to a 911 call from the shelter, the initial information we received was that the infant was left outside in negative below zero temperatures. Our investigation later determined that this information was inaccurate. We learned the infant was left inside the building with staff members. Our main concern has been and will continue to be the safety and wellbeing of both the infant and the individual who dropped the infant off.

Safe Haven is not being investigated. Our investigation into this incident is focused on identifying the infant, identifying the party who dropped off the infant, their relation to the infant, and aiding in any potential future reunification. We have worked closely with St. Louis County Initial Intervention Unit during the course of this investigation.

While we understand and respect the confidentiality Safe Haven operates under, the investigation did not violate their confidentiality obligations or statutes as the individual was not a client of the shelter. This incident also did not fall under Minnesota's 'Safe Haven Law'. This law identifies 'safe places' as hospitals, urgent care facilities, and ambulance services – not shelters or resource centers – therefore the identity of the person is not protected information.

The infant is with a foster family and is healthy. If anyone has any information regarding this case, you are encouraged to call 911 as this remains an active and ongoing investigation.

Video Statement: <https://youtu.be/HaE00mqIBsU>



Bastard Nation: the Adoptee Rights Organization

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Stop Safe Haven Baby Boxes Now

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Submitted Testimony

HF1903

Infant Safety Devices/Safe Haven Baby Box Authorization

Minnesota House Health, Finance and Policy Committee

March 17, 2025

OPPOSE

Submitted Testimony

by

Marley E. Greiner, Executive Chair. Bastard Nation

This is joint testimony submitted by Bastard Nation: the Adoptee Rights Organization and Stop Safe Haven Baby Boxes Now. I am the Executive Chair of BN and the owner of SSHBBN, the largest abandonment box information. educational and media resource website in the world.]

Bastard Nation: the Adoptee Rights Organization is the largest adoptee civil rights organization in the United States. We support only full unrestricted access for all adopted persons to their original birth certificates (OBC) and related documents.

Since 2016 we have opposed “Safe Haven Baby Boxes” aka “newborn safety devices” that allow parents to anonymously stick their infant in a box in a wall and walk away, leaving them with no birth record, identity, or history.

In 2023 Minnesota passed legislation that went into effect last year that restored the right of all Minnesota-born adoptees to obtain their OBCs without restrictions or conditions. Passage of HF1903 and the legalization of baby abandonment boxes will create a separate class of adoptees unable to enjoy the right that every other Minnesota adoptee now enjoys. Passage would be a step back from the state's proud commitment to adoptee support, dignity, and respect.

We are not alone in our opposition to baby abandonment boxes. Not one adoptee rights, birthparent rights, and adoption reform organization in the United States supports them. Other organizations oppose as well. [Here is a list of selected opponents](#). Although these organizations may not always agree with one another on individual issues, we agree on this:

We hate deceptive relinquishment practices, rooted in shame and secrecy, exemplified by baby abandonment boxes and the mission to create anonymous mothers and children. No one should be forced to parent when they can't or don't want to parent, but informed consent is paramount in the decision to relinquish a child for adoption. There are correct ways to do things, and encouraging parents to stick their baby in a box and run away isn't one of them. This secret scheme leads to drastic permanent solutions to temporary problems and denies the babies who are adopted under this system, when they grow up, to enjoy heir civil and human rights to birth and adoption records, histories, context...and dignity.

We demand ethics and accountability in adoption and related childcare practices, not a box-in-a-wall—a band-aid solution to social, economic, political, and mental health problems that cause newborn discard to happen. Boxes simply make people feel better. They are cheaper than addressing real problems.

This submitted testimony 2 contains parts:

1. Our Talking Points sheet covering objections regarding the abrogation of adoptee civil rights, birthparent rights and informed consent, and best practice and ethics in adoption that the legalization of baby abandonment boxes represent.
2. Discussion of 4 issues regarding Safe Haven Baby Boxes Inc, the ministry that holds a monopoly on all things baby box from bill writing to box manufacture to promotion (and more.) These issues are ministry's control of operation and procedures, its funding practices and most importantly the the promotion of concealed pregnancy and childbirth. This promotion is exemplified by the dangerous and even deadly video it produced and promotes online-- a veritable guide targeted at underage girls on how to conceal pregnancy, birth, and baby box “relinquishment.” The video linked in the testimony.

Stop Safe Haven Baby Boxes Now!

Why We Oppose Safe Haven Baby Boxes

Adoptee rights and adoption reform organizations throughout the United States oppose deceptive relinquishment practices that are rooted in shame and secrecy, lead to drastic permanent solutions to temporary problems, and create a population of adopted people who have no birth records, identity, or history.

We seek ethics, transparency, and accountability in adoption and in related child welfare practices, not band-aid and gimmick solutions to social, political, and mental health problems that cause newborn discards. Contrary to long-standing and established child welfare policies, the use of baby boxes (sometimes called “newborn safety devices”):

- Creates a secretive and shadow child welfare system that eliminates informed consent, a child’s identifying information, and any record of the social and medical histories of newborns. Baby boxes operate to eliminate a child’s right to identity by eliminating accurate birth registrations and records.

- Commodifies infants and normalizes “legal” baby abandonment as a consumer choice, without acknowledging the lifetime psychological consequences for the baby and the mother, including, but not limited to, abandonment issues, shame, guilt, substance abuse, depression, low self-esteem, and suicidal ideation. Boxes represent state-promoted throwaway culture; some critics call them instruments of child abuse.

- Replaces professional best practice standards with unprofessional and unethical “relinquishment” procedures. Baby boxes instead give vulnerable parents a right to abandon an infant out of convenience or ignorance, with no counseling, documentation, or discussion of established alternatives, such as adequate medical care, financial and material family preservation assistance, or crisis nurseries.

- Deprives the non-surrendering parent of the right to rear her or his own child. Baby boxes eliminate any protections to prove that a person using the box has a legal right to surrender the baby. Embarrassed, frightened, or abusive partners, spouses or family members, and even sex traffickers, will use (and undoubtedly have used) baby boxes without the consent or knowledge of the (other) parent, with no repercussions. Baby box proponents dismiss the real, dangerous, and violent situations experienced by women, simply advocating that “if your baby is taken, just call the police.”

- Disenfranchises natural parents—particularly the non-surrendering parent (usually the father)—of their right to due process by eliminating their ability to locate the child, thus denying them knowledge of (among other things) the dependency proceeding to which they are a party. State-based Putative Father Registries, touted as a safeguard, are rendered useless since records are filed by the name of the mother who remains anonymous by law.

- Creates at-risk adoptions due to possible litigation from the non-surrendering parent or biological family members who may learn of the abandonment and seek custody.

- Contravenes family reunification guidelines of the federal Adoption and Safe Families Act (AFSA)

and dispenses with tribal rights embedded in the federal Indian Child Welfare Act (ICWA), which can also lead to federal litigation.

Encourages women to keep problematic pregnancies a secret. The promotion of baby boxes discourages family and professional communication and eliminates assistance for sexual and physical abuse, mental illness, substance abuse, and social isolation—factors that cause nearly every newborn discard. Studies indicate that once a pregnancy is acknowledged and discussed the chance of discard almost always disappears.

Hides crimes such as rape, incest, spousal and partner abuse, and human trafficking.

Promotes and supports the non-profit ministry Safe Have Baby Boxes, Inc., a million-dollar corporation that controls the manufacture, promotion, sales, installation, and referral of women to baby boxes in the United States. It has created the baby box market and lobbies legislatures, produces boxes at its own factory, installs the devices, operates a hotline that refers pregnant women to box locations near them, and holds press conferences when a newborn is left in a box. Rather than protect legitimate privacy interests of the infant, it uses boxed children as fundraising tools for its ministry.

Discourages women from seeking pre-and post-natal care, instead encouraging dangerous and unsafe unattended births in the community, outside of a hospital.

Baby boxes do not address the causes of infant discard. Anonymously dropping a baby into a box and walking away does not obviate or solve the root causes of newborn discard/neo-naticide, which are:

- poverty
- inability to secure affordable medical treatment and reproductive health care
- denial or ignorance of pregnancy
- draconian immigration policies and practices
- substance abuse and physical and sexual abuse
- shame, crime, mental illness, dysfunctional families, social isolation, and poor communication skills.

More Information: Stop Safe Haven Baby Boxes Now
Marley Greiner 614) 795-6819
stopshbbnow.org

2023 Stop Safe Haven Baby Boxes Now!
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(614-795-6819 * stopshbbnow.org)

Monopoly Control

HF1903 is a vendor bill that benefits one company, Safe Haven Baby Boxes Inc in Wodburn Indiana, a **multi-million-dollar ministry that is the only source of the devices in the US**. It invented the Baby Box Movement. It controls the manufacture, promotion, sales, installation, and referral of women to baby boxes in the United States. It has created the baby box market and lobbies legislatures, produces boxes at its own factory, installs the devices, operates a hotline that refers pregnant women to box locations near them, and holds press conferences when a newborn is left in a box. Rather than protect legitimate privacy interests of the infant, it uses boxed children as fundraising tools for its ministry.

Control of Box Operation and Practices

SHBB Inc has said publicly that each box serves as an advertisement for the box company; therefore, the company controls the signage on and around around boxes. (The signage itself, is a literal advertisement for the ministry.) Some locations have reportedly attempted to include their own signage that would direct parents to consider a traditional personal walk-in relinquishment. They have asked to make available information sources about medical issues mothers may experience and compilations of information on local medical, counseling, legal, and family services, but the company reportedly refused these requests

Instead, SHBB Inc offers their own information packet in an orange bag found inside the box. From what we have seen, the packet contains minimal and possibly wrong information A box located in the Cincinnati area referred mothers to a midwife in Fort Wayne, Indiana, approximately 180 miles away. [The information sheet on post-natal problems](#) (also online in FAQ form) is a joke. The Ohio Health Review Board found the bag to be debris as per state law, and suggested it could be hung on a hook or kept in some kind of container next to the box door. I believe they are now required to include Ohio government-produced information on child welfare. I have no idea if the company complied with the order.

SHBB Inc controls baby box practices and procedures. Box locations are required to inform SHBB Inc within 2 hours of a drop-off; then prohibited from announcing the case publicly until the company shapes an official announcement that appears in news and social media. Last year a fire station in Alabama was taken to public task when the local newspaper reported a drop-off before the company was able to blow its own horn. The company frequently states that each baby dropped in the box generates money and publicity.

I have in my possession copies of SHBB Inc lease contracts and Policy Procedures in Goshen and Munster, Indiana, as well as a 5-page scathing memorandum from the Goshen Clerk-Treasurer stating his concerns about the city's agreement with the company and recommendations regarding them. Quite an eye-opener! I would be happy to furnish them to anyone interested in reading them. According to a recent news story, a dozen boxes in San Antonio, Texas, have not been installed because of the City Attorney's problems with the contract (see below under "Cost" for more on that).

Finally, SHBB Inc runs its own private "family registry." The company's low info orange bag packet includes a printed form that parents can fill out at the time of drop-off or any time later to establish health and social histories—and even include identities-- to mail to the company. This form compares poorly to the professionally designed detailed voluntary medical and social history forms available to parents in traditional Safe Haven cases that states offer. The SHBB Inc form is held "anonymous" and is not available to appropriate state agencies or adoption agencies appointed by the state to administer custody, care, and baby placement, Nor, as far as we know, is this information given to the adoptive parents of boxed babies. The company purposefully squirrels away for its own unknown purposes personal and "private" information about babies and parents, that in normal adoptions would most

likely be shared. I can't find an image of such a Minnesota form, but the SHBB Inc form and the Ohio Department of Jobs and Family Services form are [found here](#).

Cost of Boxes and Funding

SHBB Inc sells its product to lawmakers and the public by saying the acquisition/lease of a box is a voluntary, local initiative funded not by public funds but by voluntary donations from individuals, ministries, churches, fraternal organizations, non-profits, anti-abortion organizations, and foundations.

SHBB Inc initially operated on these donations, and substantial funds from them are still collected. In the last couple of years, however, states and local jurisdictions have diverted taxpayer dollars to pay for them. This year, the Wyoming legislature rejected a bill to allocate \$300,000 and possibly more to pay for boxes, even though no discards were reported for at least 8 years. Indiana has allocated \$1,000,000. New Mexico, with no box law on the books, \$330,000. San Antonio, Texas, allocated nearly \$450,000 for 12 boxes that remain unpaid and uninstalled [due to the City Attorney's unspecified concerns about SHBB Inc company's proposed contract with the city](#).

Some locations have taken money from COVID and Homeland Security accounts.

In Union Township, Ohio, outside of Cincinnati, township trustees decided it was OK to bypass Ohio law requiring at the time 24/7 staffing at box locations and to outright pay the approximately \$16,000 lease fee in its entirety with taxpayer money, not donations. When local conservative political watchdog Chris Hicks, who has no compunction taking on all comers, just not Democrats and liberals, visited the fire station, to see what the box was all about, he found the facility empty with a working box in its wall. Hicks cried foul! He continued his investigation, chronicling it on Facebook and YouTube. Not to be beaten, the already over-spending trustees dug in deciding to hire an extra firefighter to babysit the facility and keep the box running. SHBB Inc promised to fund the new firefighter but did not. ([See video](#), courtesy of Chris Hicks.) Thus, local taxpayers were dunned not only the cost of the box but paying an extra full-time firefighter at union scale with benefits.

Safety, Health, and Welfare of Mother and Child

Promotion and the availability of baby abandonment boxes discourages women from seeking pre- and post-natal care. Instead, SHBB Inc facilitates those in so-called “crisis pregnancies” to undergo dangerous and unsafe unattended births and care outside of a medical and safe setting.

SHBB Inc claims that it advises its callers to seek counseling services (the company's counselor and outside sources), pre- and postnatal care, safe delivery, etc, **but the 9 minute video (deceptively called a Public Service Announcement) which has had 27K views on its YouTube channel, is a step-by-step guide, targeting teenage girls, on how to keep pregnancy, delivery, and birth concealed--a secret.** The video panders to a fantasy that pregnancy, even under secret conditions, is a walk in the park, physically and emotionally. Those who follow its guidance could die. Their babies could die. According to SHBB Inc, the youngest mother they have guided anonymously to the box was 12.

This is the link to the [video](#).

This is the link to the [blog](#) I wrote explaining some of the problems.

We know of 2 deaths associated with baby abandonment boxes. SHBB Inc announced on TikTok that one of its mothers OD'd and died shortly after boxing her baby---a suspected suicide. (The video seems to have been taken down [but here is what I wrote about it](#)) In Blackfoot, Idaho, [an 18-year old mom left her deceased newborn in a box](#) and is now being prosecuted, so far, with failure to report a death.

There could be other tragedies that we don't know about.

Although the boxes undergo testing at the SHBB Inc headquarters and at box locations before they go live, they are also unregulated. The company acknowledges on its website that the USDA does not consider them to be medical devices. Devices are not UL tested and listed. It makes no sense that the lamp on your nightstand is required to be UL listed, but baby abandonment boxes, which plug into a wall and contain a multiple alarm system, are not. The SHBB Inc CEO has refused to discuss why they are not listed. ([See video here](#). *Courtesy of Chris Hicks*), has claimed that they will be someday.

Conclusion

The promotion and use of Safe Haven Baby Boxes is anti-adoptive, anti-adoption, anti-family, and unethical. They promulgate the old secret system that adopted people have battled for over 70 years to abolish and that Minnesota fixed.

Baby abandonment box promoters subscribe, whether or not they realize it, to the long-discredited “blank slate” theory of adoption, reducing adoptees (whom they assume box babies will become) to familyless, historyless commodities—gifts given to strangers to mold (often through God's agency) with no thought of the consequences to the infant's legal and psychological welfare or that of their biological parents.

Instead, advocates promote boxes as a consumerist “choice”—a simple solution for parents (usually mothers) so “desperate” that unless they can dump their newborns anonymously in a box-in-a-wall they will kill them or at least discard them dangerously. Proponents simultaneously and seriously claim at box blessings and other public events that these “dangerous” parents love and want to protect their babies not discard or murder them, but may be forced to do so without the “100% anonymity” their company guarantees with the box. When asked to provide evidence of the efficacy of baby abandonment boxes, advocates can cite no studies or facts—only an intuitive “we just know.” The fact is that the number of reported dangerous discard cases throughout the US has remained steady for decades, and there is no proof whatsoever that one baby has been “saved by a box. Boxes are simply an easy way to get rid of a problem.

Please vote DO NOT PASS on HF1903.

Thank you!