

**HEALTHY
MOMS.
STRONG
BABIES.**



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March 24, 2022

Representative Liebling,

I am writing on behalf of March of Dimes regarding HF 4398 and to express our support, in particular for:

Minnesota Collaborative to Prevent Infant Mortality

At first glance it would seem that infant mortality improved in Minnesota in 2019 (the most recent data), going from 5.1 per 1,000 live births to 4.5. However, when disaggregated by race and ethnicity, it can be seen that this improvement is only for white babies. American Indian babies in Minnesota are dying at a rate of 12.6 per 1000 live births, Black babies at a rate of 8 and white babies at a rate of 3.9. That means that an American Indian baby in Minnesota is over 3x more likely to die and a Black baby is 2x as likely to die than a white baby.

The leading cause of infant mortality in Minnesota is birth defects, followed by preterm birth/low birth weight and then maternal pregnancy complications. We need to invest in what works: Addressing disparities head-on, improving women's health before pregnancy, improving reproductive health planning, increasing access to risk-appropriate and culturally responsive prenatal, during delivery and postpartum care, reducing maternal & household smoking and promoting safe sleep practices for infants.

For such a range of solutions, we must leverage partnerships for to make progress. The Minnesota Collaborative to Prevent Infant Mortality provides a platform to do just that. Together we can work to dismantle racism and address unequal treatment, increase access to high quality risk appropriate healthcare and build safe, connected communities.

We can and we must do better.

If this pandemic has taught us anything, it's how fragile our country's and state's support system is for our youngest and most vulnerable citizens. As we look beyond this pandemic and consider lessons learned, policymakers must act to ensure the health of all families, regardless of wealth, race or geography.

March of Dimes urges members of the committee to pass HF 4398 to take a step to ensuring that all babies in Minnesota have a healthy start.

Sincerely,
Ellen Jirik
Maternal & Infant Health Manager
March of Dimes