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In Support of HB26-1024 - Raising Age of Voluntary Relinquishment of Child

My name is Tom Perille. I am a physician and President of Democrats for Life of Colorado and on the executive team of AAPLOG Colorado. I am here representing myself and these organizations in support HB26-1024.

Infant mortality is recognized as one of the most pressing concerns in our state, disproportionately affecting people of color. Neonatal homicide is a significant factor.

The most vulnerable time for infants is within the first day of life when the death rate from homicide has historically been 10 times greater than any other time during life.¹ However, the infant homicide rate remains unacceptably high during the ensuing month after birth.

Neonatal homicide is frequently perpetrated by the mother who might be young, unmarried, and have lower educational attainment.¹⁻² It may involve a mother who has concealed her unintended pregnancy, had limited or no prenatal care, and sometimes reflects a non-hospital birth. Commonly, the relationship with the father has ended or is in the process of ending. It may arise from the realization that the mother has limited available resources to care for the child. Most women implicated in neonatal homicide regret their decision and would have benefited from a clear plan when they became overwhelmed.³

During the period between 1989 and 1998 the overall homicide risk for infants was 8.3 per 100,000 person-years but on the first day of life, it was 222.2 per 100,000 person-years.¹ This shocking fact led to the proliferation of Safe Haven Laws since 1999 which attempt to provide vulnerable women and their newborn babies with a clear alternative.

Safe Haven Laws allow a parent to legally surrender an infant who might otherwise be abandoned or endangered. Some form of Safe Haven Laws has been enacted in all 50 states and Puerto Rico. They vary in detail, but they share a common goal – to reduce neonate endangerment.

Since their institution, an estimated 5200 infants have been safely surrendered nationwide.⁴ There has been an associated drop in the neonatal homicide rate by 66%. While correlation does not prove causation, it is safe to assume that Safe Haven Laws have played an important role.

Extending Colorado's Safe Haven window to **30 days** does not claim to solve all infant homicides or the scourge of infant mortality. Most tragedies occur later in infancy and require broader prevention strategies. But a 30-day window for relinquishment **meaningfully aligns the law with the period when crisis is still acute, judgment may be impaired, and a last-resort option can make the difference between life and death.**

HB26-1024 adds another compassionate option for at-risk mothers and infants and deserves your bipartisan support.

Thomas J. Perille MD FACP FHM

References:

1. MMWR October 2, 2020; Infant Homicides with the context of safe haven laws – United State, 2008-2017
2. Wilson RF et.al., Neonaticides in the United States – 2008-2017; Academic Forensic Pathology May 2021.
3. Milia G and Noonan M, Experiences and perspective of women who have committed neonaticide, infanticide, and filicide. A systematic review and qualitative evidence synthesis. J Psychiatric and Mental Health Nursing 2022; 813-829.
4. National Safe Haven Alliance. Accessed 2/9/2026 at www.nationalsafehavenalliance.org.