

Rep. Schutt: Introduces legislation to enhance Safe Haven Law

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Madison, WI - In an effort to protect the lives of newborn infants, Representative Ellen Schutt (R-Clinton) along with Senator Joan Ballweg (R-Markesan) introduced legislation that would expand the existing safe haven law to include the use of newborn infant safety devices.

Wisconsin's current safe haven law allows parents to anonymously surrender a newborn infant believed to be under 72 hours old to designated authorities. However, the law does not explicitly address or permit the use of "newborn infant safety devices," limiting relinquishment to in-person exchanges only.

LRB-2961/1 would allow a municipality to install a newborn infant safety device at a hospital, fire station, or law enforcement agency building and thereby allow a parent to anonymously relinquish a child under the age of 72 hours. The legislation aims to address the concerns and fears that deter some parents from utilizing the safe haven law, particularly in tight-knit communities where stigma surrounding relinquishment exists.

"Allowing a parent to anonymously relinquish a child under the age of 72 hours will save numerous newborn babies," said Representative Schutt.

This issue hits close to home for Representative Schutt. In March of 2023, a newborn baby was left in a field in Whitewater. According to the criminal complaint, the mother admitted to leaving the baby because of fear of losing her other children due to the nature of her pregnancy.

"The heart-wrenching story driven by fear and desperation, highlights the urgent need for solutions that can prevent such heartbreaking outcomes. Baby boxes, with

their potential to provide a safe and anonymous option for parents in distress, will save lives.”