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Protecting Life through Safe Havens

Last week, the Wood County Sheriff's Department received a report regarding a missing newborn. Wood County deputies and Marshfield police officers then found an abandoned vehicle in a medical center's parking lot. Inside the vehicle, a baby boy was found wrapped inside a bath towel and a tied plastic garbage bag.

This was a horrific scene that could have been avoided. It was reported that the baby had been in the bag for about three hours before he was found by law enforcement. Upon discovery, the baby was rushed inside the medical center and temporarily revived by staff before passing away. It was then reported that the baby was born that same morning.

I am working with individuals from law enforcement, hospitals, and emergency services to draft a bill that would provide resources to those seeking a safe haven in order to prevent this disturbing tragedy from reoccurring. In Wisconsin, we have a Safe Haven Law which allows parents of a newborn to anonymously surrender their child within 72 hours of birth without facing criminal prosecution.

But, as evident by this story we must go further in utilizing the anonymity of the law by providing a physical tool for the protection of the child's life. Our bill would allow for the creation of newborn safety boxes to be placed at medical centers and law enforcement agencies so that parents may place their unwanted child in a *Safe Haven* baby box. The box is equipped with heating, cooling, and a silent alarm that notifies emergency personnel within thirty seconds of placement. These boxes have already been installed in Indiana, Ohio, and Arizona.

If we want to protect the newborn child in this last resort situation, we must provide a safer way for parents to surrender the baby without fear of criminal prosecution. It is time we value life through all stages. The protection of life begins at conception, but our role in the pro-life movement does not stop at birth: it continues through all stages.

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