

The Newborn Foundation and Newborn Coalition Applaud Pennsylvania and Wisconsin for Advancements in Newborn Screening

July 7, 2014

Saint Paul, MN ([rushPRnews](#))

07/07/14 — The [Newborn](#)

[Foundation](#) and [Newborn](#)

[Coalition](#) applaud the states of Pennsylvania and Wisconsin for their recent enactment of legislation and provisions to add newborn heart screening to the uniform panel in both states.



newborn foundation | coalition

On Monday, June 30, Governor Scott Walker announced he had signed an emergency rule ensuring all babies born in Wisconsin would be screened for congenital heart defects (CHDs) before hospital discharge using pulse oximetry. The simple, non-invasive, and effective test will help catch critical heart defects, which might otherwise have gone undetected in babies. CHDs are the most common and deadly birth defect. The Wisconsin legislature had passed a bill earlier this year that would allow the state's Department of Health Services to begin writing rules requiring that hospitals carry out the test as part of the newborn screening program, but stopped short of mandating the screening for every newborn.

Also last week, the Pennsylvania General Assembly passed [H.B. 1420](#), critical legislation that would require pulse oximetry testing for newborns, following a unanimous concurrence vote by the House. Now that the bill has passed both legislative chambers, it awaits the signature of Governor Tom Corbett. The state's Newborn Screening and Follow-up Program under the Pennsylvania Department of Health had previously added CHD screening to the Newborn Screening Point-of-Care Program. However, existing statutory language left a gap in universal screening requirements that the legislation will help cover, ensuring all babies delivered at licensed hospitals and birthing centers will be screened prior to discharge.

The American Academy of Pediatrics, American Heart Association and American College of Cardiology, March of Dimes and the Newborn Coalition have all called for testing using pulse oximetry, which uses a painless, non-invasive beam of light to measure the level of blood oxygen saturation in newborns that may otherwise appear healthy. Heart defects and other serious health conditions in the newborn period are still among the top reasons for newborn mortality and poor health outcomes. The screening has also been shown to be helpful in earlier detection of other important health conditions in newborns - such as sepsis, pneumonia,

pulmonary hypertension and respiratory illness.

"It's been our goal from day one to ensure babies are diagnosed early so they can get the care they need, regardless of circumstance or geography. We commend the leadership in both Wisconsin and Pennsylvania for taking these important steps to help ensure the survival and improved care of all newborns. And we encourage the handful of remaining states to follow suit," said Annamarie Saarinen, Co-founder and CEO of the Newborn Foundation | Coalition.



Since 2010, the Newborn Foundation | Coalition has been focused on domestic policy and educational efforts to implement newborn screening for

the Critical Congenital Heart Disease (CCHD), the most common and deadly of all birth defects. The Newborn Coalition's cchdscreeningmap.org shows more than 40 states have now enacted CCHD legislation or statutory requirements for screening. When the Newborn Coalition spearheaded efforts in 2010 to get the condition nominated for inclusion on the U.S. Routine Uniform Screening Panel (RUSP), the number of U.S. babies screened for heart defects was less than 1/3 of one percent. By the end of 2014, more than 80 percent of all U.S. newborns will be screened.

Internationally, the Newborn Foundation's [BORN Project](#) (Birth Oximetry Routine for Newborns) was just recognized as part of the United Nation's [Every Newborn Action Plan](#) at a global maternal and newborn health meeting in Johannesburg, South Africa. The project was highlighted as a high impact program combatting preventable newborn deaths through the use of pulse oximetry screening for early detection of infection and "hidden" heart problems in newborns.

About the Newborn Foundation | Coalition

[The Newborn Foundation](#) | [Coalition](#) is an international non-profit working specifically to leverage health IT and medical technologies to improve access and outcomes while reducing disparities for newborns. The organization has been integral in the policy development, adoption and implementation of technologies for early detection, intervention and care of the youngest patients, including universal newborn screening for hypoxemia and heart conditions as a public health initiative.

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Main image credits: Newborn Foundation

Filed Under: [BUSINESS NEWS](#), [Technology](#), [Health and Fitness](#)

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