

NEWS RELEASE

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PHYSICIANS SUPPORT NEWBORN SCREENING BILL

MINNEAPOLIS—The Minnesota Medical Association is encouraging the Minnesota House to pass and Gov. Pawlenty to sign a bill that would preserve the state's newborn screening program, which detects dangerous metabolic conditions in time to save babies' lives.

The bill (S.F. 3138) would ensure the program does not conflict with a genetic privacy law that was passed in 2006. The bill would also expand parental rights. Currently, parents can opt out of having screening tests and request that residual dried blood spots be destroyed. The bill would also require hospitals to let parents know that they can opt out of testing if they wish.

About one in 800 babies are born with a hidden, rare disorder that can be found by newborn screening, according to the Minnesota Department of Health.

Reasons to support newborn screening include:

- Newborn screening saves lives and prevents brain damage and retardation.
- If a birth defect is diagnosed and treated early it can mean the difference between being disabled and leading a healthy life.

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- Parents who object have the opportunity to opt out of testing.
- If parents are required to "opt in" for these tests, as some opponents of this bill wish, compliance can be expected to fall off dramatically.

“Minnesota is a leader in screening newborns for genetic disorders said James Dehen Jr., M.D., president of the MMA. “This bill will allow that important work to continue.”

The Minnesota Medical Association (MMA) is a professional association for Minnesota physicians and medical students, with about 10,000 members.