General Assembly

**Raised Bill No. 1310**

*January Session, 2025*

LCO No. **4626**

Referred to Committee on COMMITTEE ON CHILDREN

Introduced by:
(KID)

***AN ACT AUTHORIZING HOSPITALS TO INSTALL DEVICES ON AN EXTERIOR WALL OF AN EMERGENCY DEPARTMENT TO FACILITATE THE VOLUNTARY SURRENDER OF INFANTS TO EMERGENCY DEPARTMENT STAFF.***

Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives in General Assembly convened:

Section 1. Section 17a-58 of the general statutes is repealed and the following is substituted in lieu thereof (*Effective October 1, 2025*):

(a) An employee designated pursuant to section 17a-57, as amended by this act, shall take physical custody of any infant thirty days or younger if the parent or lawful agent of the parent voluntarily surrenders physical custody of the infant to such designated employee unless the parent or agent clearly expresses an intent to return for the infant.

(b) (1) If the mother of an infant wishes to voluntarily surrender physical custody of the infant while the mother is in the hospital to give birth to the infant, the mother shall provide notice that she wishes to surrender physical custody of the infant to any health care provider who is licensed by the Department of Public Health and who provides health

care services on behalf of the hospital. Upon receipt of such notice, such health care provider shall notify the designated employee pursuant to section 17a-57, as amended by this act, who shall immediately take physical custody of the infant. No hospital employee or health care provider shall disclose the name of the mother to the Department of Children and Families or any person or organization without the mother's permission.

(2) If the parent of an infant wishes to voluntarily surrender physical custody of the infant after the infant has been born and is no longer in the hospital, the parent may surrender the infant by placing the infant in a safe haven bassinet, as described in section 17a-57, as amended by this act, if available. Upon surrender of the infant pursuant to this subdivision, the designated employee shall immediately take physical custody of the infant.

(c) The designated employee may request the parent or agent, other than a parent described in subdivision (2) of subsection (b) of this section, to provide (1) the name of the parent or agent, (2) information on the medical history of the infant and parents, and (3) the infant's name and date of birth if the infant's birth has been registered in the state vital records system prior to the surrender of the infant. Notwithstanding such a request from the designated employee, the parent or agent is not required to provide such name or information. The designated employee may provide the parent or agent with a numbered identification bracelet to link the parent or agent to the infant. The bracelet shall be used for identification only and shall not be construed to authorize the person who possesses the bracelet to take custody of the infant on demand. The designated employee shall provide the parent or agent with a pamphlet describing the process established under sections 17a-57 to 17a-60, inclusive, as amended by this act, and sections 17a-61, 53-21 and 53-23.

Sec. 2. Section 17a-57 of the general statutes is repealed and the following is substituted in lieu thereof (*Effective October 1, 2025*):

(a) Each hospital operating an emergency room shall designate all members of the emergency room nursing staff as employees authorized to take physical custody of an infant pursuant to section 17a-58, as amended by this act. There shall be a designated employee on duty at each hospital emergency room during regular business hours. There shall be a designated place inside such hospital emergency room where physical custody may be taken.

(b) Any hospital operating an emergency room may install a safe haven bassinet on an exterior wall of the emergency department for the purpose of receiving infants who are voluntarily surrendered pursuant to section 17a-58, as amended by this act. Any such safe haven bassinet shall be climate controlled and include (1) an exterior door that automatically locks upon the placement of an infant in the bassinet when the door is closed, and (2) a notification alarm that alerts emergency room nursing staff that an infant has been placed in the bassinet.

| This act shall take effect as follows and shall amend the following sections: | | |
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| Section 1 | *October 1, 2025* | 17a-58 |
| Sec. 2 | *October 1, 2025* | 17a-57 |

***Statement of Purpose:***

To prevent infant abandonment and provide a safe and legal option for parents in crisis to voluntarily surrender an infant to emergency department staff.

***[Proposed deletions are enclosed in brackets. Proposed additions are indicated by underline, except that when the entire text of a bill or resolution or a section of a bill or resolution is new, it is not underlined.]***