

SB 42, Concerning the study and investigation of maternal deaths in the state of Kansas.

Senator Richard Hilderbrand, Chair
Senator Beverly Gossage, Vice Chair
Ranking Minority Member, Pat Petty
Committee Members at Large

The future of Kansas rests upon the shoulders of Kansas mothers. I've found this to be overwhelmingly true in the time I have spent helping hundreds of Kansas families through childbirth over the past eight years. It is true in our smallest Amish communities where I've witnessed mothers give birth by candlelight, and it is equally true in our largest cities where parents are surrounded by state-of-the-art hospitals.

Mothers are vital to our future as a state because they are our first teachers, our first nurturers, and the foundation upon which we build our communities. If we are lucky, we are afforded many years with our mothers before we must embark upon the difficult task of figuring out how to face life without them. For far too many Kansas children, that lesson will come too early because their mom will end up dying in childbirth or shortly after. The grief that these children are left with is almost too massive to quantify in words. This loss of a mother in childbirth is the stuff of nightmares- a tangible fear that is frequently expressed by the husbands and partners of many of the pregnant women I've served. They are acutely aware that the United States has the worst maternal mortality rates of any industrialized nation, and they oftentimes express a feeling of powerlessness knowing that a healthy mother and baby is not a guaranteed outcome. For their sake, I yearn for a brighter future in which all our neighbors in Kansas can be reasonably assured that their community's mothers and babies will not die of preventable causes. I look forward to the day when the statistics in Kansas no longer show that over 90 percent of our state's maternal deaths were preventable. I look forward to the day when every baby and mother in Kansas, no matter their race or zip code, has an equal chance at living a long, healthy life.

Kansas families need your help. They need to know that we are using every tool at our disposal to prevent maternal deaths in our state. As Kansans, we must unite behind the shared belief that every baby deserves a strong start in life with a healthy, thriving mother. I'm asking for your support of SB 42, which will help to preserve and protect the lives of current and future generations of Kansas mothers. SB 42 would move us closer to tangible solutions by enlisting the help of more stakeholders from the communities most impacted by maternal mortality. The bill would be of enormous benefit to all Kansas families because it arms our state's maternal mortality review committee with enhanced tools to examine the factors leading to maternal deaths. For the future of Kansas children, mothers, and families, we must act swiftly to ensure that SB 42 becomes law.

Sapphire Garcia-Lies

President and Founder of Wichita Birth Justice Society