

# HB 5751 – Safe Haven Devices

## Supporting Testimony

Thank you, Mr./Madam Chair, my name is \_\_\_\_\_ and I am here today to speak to you in favor of HB 5751.

On March 26, 2021, a middle-aged woman was found unresponsive in her home. She was rushed to the hospital, and it was determined that she had recently given birth. Officers were sent to her home to find the newborn, and they sadly found the child dead in a dumpster. Unfortunately, this is not an isolated case.

Mr./Madam Chair, we have made significant progress in reducing the cases of illegal and dangerous child abandonment since the safe haven laws were passed in Michigan allowing young mothers to surrender their children to emergency service providers by taking them to an emergency care facility. However, evidence has shown that those efforts are not enough by themselves. We need to be doing more to protect the innocent lives of newborn babies in our state.

This is why I urge you to vote yes on HB 5751. This bill would allow emergency care providers to remove another barrier to mothers in a crisis situation. The appeal to anonymity is a good start, but the fact that a mother would still have to physically enter a building and face a person might be too much of an intimidation. Most of us can't relate to the decisions a mother will make in a moment of crisis, but it is our responsibility to do everything we can to make sure that the child is given over safely.

There are no new risks in this bill that do not already exist within Michigan's safe haven laws. Concerns surrounding a lack of information provided because of the anonymous nature of these laws are understandable, but it is far more risky to allow mothers without in a crisis situation go without options. We need to help them safely deliver their children and this is just one more step in achieving that goal.

Some may raise concerns regarding the cost of these boxes. But let us consider two things. First, there is no cost to taxpayers for the installation of these devices. If you read the bill carefully, it only permits the haven device as an option and requires certain specifications. In fact this are to be privately funded by the community. Even if there were some taxpayer burden, though, isn't this the kind of program our taxpayer dollars should be spent on? The protection of innocent life?

Some people have also raised concerns that a child may be left alone in the box for too long and suffer harm as a result. To that I would ask you: is it safer for a child to be left in a dumpster or a climate controlled box where he or she will be attended to a maximum of five minutes later? I think the choice is obvious.

Mr./Madam Chair, this committee undoubtedly faces many complicated pieces of legislation that has a long list of pros and cons to weigh against various stakeholders. This is not one of those bills. This is a straightforward, common sense piece of legislation that ought to be adopted immediately. For the safety of children, I urge you to vote yes on HB 5751. I will gladly take any questions at this time.

## Articles

Gaby Galvin (July 10, 2018). U.S. News, A Split over Safe Havens. Retrieved from

<https://www.usnews.com/news/healthiest-communities/articles/2018-07-10/baby-boxes-safe-haven-laws-a-last-resort-to-curb-infant-abandonment>

Gus Burns (April 3, 2017). MLive, Mom charged with murder of newborn found in trash. Retrieved from

[https://www.mlive.com/news/detroit/2017/04/mom\\_charged\\_with\\_murder\\_of\\_new.html#incart\\_river\\_index](https://www.mlive.com/news/detroit/2017/04/mom_charged_with_murder_of_new.html#incart_river_index)