



NSHA Testimony
BR23-0212

Greetings,

We are Heather Burner, Executive Director, and Leah Kipley, Assistant Director, of the National Safe Haven Alliance. The National Safe Haven Alliance (NSHA) is a 501(c)3 nonprofit working to end infant abandonment and infanticide in the US and its territories. NSHA is the leading, national Safe Haven advocacy organization and subject matter expert on Safe Haven best practices. NSHA works with state agencies, Safe Haven organizations, Safe Haven providers, and parents across the nation. NSHA operates a 24/7 confidential hotline in all states for parents in crisis and supports states' efforts to end infant abandonment by updating Safe Haven laws and providing tools to increase Safe Haven awareness.

Safe Haven laws allow a parent to anonymously relinquish an unharmed infant with a Safe Haven provider without fear of prosecution. The law gives a desperate parent a safe alternative and saves the life of a vulnerable infant. Each state and the U.S. territories of Puerto Rico and Guam have a Safe Haven law. Since the laws were enacted in 1999 and early 2000s, over 4,600 infants have been safely surrendered in the U.S. under the Safe Haven law as opposed to 1,600 illegally abandoned. Thus far in 2023, more than 35 babies have been illegally abandoned in the U.S. We have an opportunity to provide safe and comprehensive options for families in need of alternatives.

The U.S. Virgin Islands is the only remaining U.S. territory that has yet to enact a Safe Haven law. NSHA supports U.S.VI BR23-0212, Safe Haven Newborn Protection Act which will provide safe alternatives to desperate parents and save innocent lives. NSHA supports the directives in this bill as it is in line with model Safe Haven legislation. NSHA can assist the U.S Virgin Islands with efforts to establish a 24/7, confidential, Safe Haven crisis hotline (which would provide all safe options to the parent), provide tools for education and signage for Safe Haven providers, and public outreach/awareness campaigns.

With a comprehensive approach to ending infant abandonment we have a unique opportunity to promote family preservation, and in critical circumstances, to utilize every safe option available including family or temporary placement, adoption, and Safe Haven surrender. We are encouraged by this bill and with more than 20 years of helping parents in crisis, NSHA believes that implementing a Safe Haven law will create a safe and secure environment for mothers, fathers, and children.

Sincerely,

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Alliance Director, Arizona Safe Baby Haven Foundation
Director, NSHAC; Crisis Pregnancy Safety & Prevention

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