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**Legislation to Screen Newborns for Congenital Heart Defects Introduced**

*Simple Test Could Save Lives*

(MADISON, WIS) — Senator Jerry Petrowski (R—Marathon) and Representative Joel Kleefisch (R—Oconomowoc) introduced Senate Bill 104 and Assembly Bill 111, legislation to ensure all babies born in Wisconsin are screened for Congenital Heart Defects (CHD) prior to hospital discharge. Evidence indicates that performing a pulse oximetry screening on newborns would help prevent babies with unrecognized critical congenital heart defect from going home, only to have serious complications and require emergency care soon after.

"This screening is non-invasive, inexpensive and can potentially save a child's life," says Stuart Berger, MD, medical director, Herma Heart Center, Children's Hospital of Wisconsin and professor of pediatric cardiology, Medical College of Wisconsin, and advocate for the American Heart Association in Wisconsin. "It is the right thing to do."

**The Issue – Critical Congenital Heart Defects**

- 8 out of 1,000 babies are born with a congenital heart defect making it the most common birth defect.
- A quarter of babies with CHD will be diagnosed with a Critical Congenital Heart Defect (CCHD) – a life-threatening condition that requires interventions such as surgery within the first days or months of life.
- Each year in the United States over 100 babies die of unrecognized CCHD.
- In September 2011, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services Secretary Kathleen Sebelius approved adding CCHD to the Recommended Uniform Screening Panel, a list of conditions all states should consider screening for.

"Newborn screening is a successful preventive health activity. Babies can be born with a serious health condition but look completely normal," said Maureen Kartheiser, State Director of Program Services and Public Affairs at March of Dimes. "If a health condition, like CCHD, is found early with newborn screening it can be treated promptly and possibly avoid death or disability."

This legislation is supported by the American Heart Association, Mended Little Hearts, March of Dimes, Children's Hospital of Wisconsin, UW Health American Family Children's Hospital, Marshfield Clinic, the Wisconsin Chapter of the American College of Cardiology, the Wisconsin Chapter of the American Academy of Pediatrics, and the Wisconsin Nurses Association. Eight states have implemented similar requirements and at least 17 states currently have active legislation.

"We would like to thank Senator Petrowski and Representative Kleefisch for their leadership on this issue," said Nicole Hudzinski, Government Relations Director with the American Heart Association. "We would also like to thank the bi-partisan group of legislators who are supporting this truly life-saving legislation."

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