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Testimony Re: S0234 – Newborn Screenings
Senate Health & Human Services Committee
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Mr. Chairman and members of the Committee, thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony today. Rhode Island KIDS COUNT offers its strong support for Senate Bill 0234 which mandates the rules and regulations of the Department of Health pertaining to newborn screening to include at a minimum, newborn screening tests for all disorders and conditions listed in the current federal Recommended Uniform Screening Panel (RUSP) and shall include newborn screening tests for all new disorders or conditions added to the RUSP within two years after the disorder or condition is added; provided that if the Director of the Health Department determines in writing that it is not practicable to include a new disorder or condition within two years, the time period may be extended for the shortest amount of time necessary as determined by the Director.

Newborn Screening in Rhode Island:

Newborn screening is the practice of testing newborn babies for certain harmful or potentially fatal disorders. Rhode Island law, requires that all birthing hospitals in Rhode Island screen every baby for 33 blood conditions, as well as hearing loss and critical congenital heart disease. All babies are tested because babies with these disorders often appear healthy at birth. Sometimes more tests are needed to confirm preliminary or early test results. Serious problems, including developmental delays and death, can be prevented if the disorders are discovered and treatment can be started early.

Recommended Uniform Screening Panel:

The RUSP is a list of disorders that the Secretary of the US Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) recommends for states to screen as part of their state universal newborn screening (NBS) programs.

Disorders on the RUSP are chosen based on evidence that supports the potential net benefit of screening, the ability of states to screen for the disorder, and the availability of effective treatments. It is recommended that every newborn be screened for all disorders on the RUSP.

Conclusion:

Most states, including Rhode Island, screen for the majority of the 35 disorders on the RUSP. This bill will ensure that RI screen for all disorders listed in the current version of the RUSP and that any new disorders that are added to the RUSP in the future are screened for in the state of Rhode Island. We thank Senators Lawson, Miller, Cano, Goldin, Valverde, Quezada, Bell, DiMario and Murray for sponsoring this bill and we urge its passage.

