



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

William Larkin

Senate Gives Final Passage to Bill to Test Newborns for Congenital Heart Defects Through Pulse Oximetry Screening

WILLIAM J. LARKIN JR. June 12, 2013

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The New York State Senate today gave final legislative passage to a bill that would require all birthing facilities to screen newborn babies for congenital heart defects (CHDs) through a process called pulse oximetry screening. The bill (S.270B), sponsored by Senator William Larkin (R-C, Cornwall-on-Hudson), will save lives through earlier detection of possible heart defects.

“Pulse oximetry screenings are painless, and take one minute to perform,” said Senator Larkin. “By performing this simple test, doctors can take the appropriate and necessary steps to ensure that newborns get the care they need, should they have heart defects. Simply, this measure will save lives.”

“Our son Jacob was born and appeared to be a completely healthy baby boy, but on his second day of life, he turned blue,” said American Heart Association volunteer Kelsey Thomas of Syracuse, who on Monday came with her superhero son to deliver American Heart Association petitions to the Senate in support of the bill. “The pulse ox test showed a low level of oxygen in his blood, and eight days later, he had surgery to repair a rare congenital heart defect. Today, he’s 14 months old, healthy and active. But what if he had

turned blue in the night, or hadn't been in the hospital? I'm glad that all parents will now have the assurance that pulse ox gives, and that all babies will have the chance to live a long and healthy life. It's a little test that can give a big result – a saved life.”

For newborns, pulse oximetry screening involves taping a small sensor to the baby's foot while the sensor beams a light through the foot to measure the amount of oxygen in the blood. This type of screening is effective at finding congenital heart defects that may otherwise go undetected by current screening methods.

Current methods used to detect CHDs include prenatal ultrasound screening, and repeated clinical examinations, but these tests identify less than half of all CHD cases.

According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, about 4,800 babies are born each year with some form of congenital heart defect, which are the leading cause of infant deaths due to birth defects.

The bill now goes to the Governor for his consideration.