



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

David J. Valesky

Lifesaving Legislation to Screen Newborns for Heart Defects Becomes Law

David J. Valesky

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ALBANY, N.Y.—Governor Cuomo signed into law legislation ([S.270](#)) co-sponsored by State Senator David J. Valesky (D-Oneida) that requires facilities to perform pulse oximetry screenings on newborns. This test can help doctors and nurses detect critical congenital heart defects (CCHD), often before the appearance of symptoms.

In Syracuse, a pulse oximetry test saved the life of newborn Jacob Thomas. He was born April 10, 2012 and appeared to be a healthy baby. Two days later, his skin turned bluish. A nurse performed a pulse oximetry test on Jacob and learned that his blood-oxygen level was dangerously low. He was diagnosed with a congenital heart defect, which is a common birth defect. The pulse oximetry test quickly identified the problem, and Jacob received the treatment he needed to survive.

"I am overcome with joy that Governor Cuomo has recognized the significance of the pulse oximetry bill and signed it into law. My son Jacob's life was saved because this screening was performed on him during his hospital stay. He could have been discharged from the hospital and become one of many babies who have passed away in their sleep. Too many babies have lost their lives because this simple test was not mandatory in the past," Kelsey Thomas, Jacob's mother, said. "It gives me so much pride knowing that something our family has worked so hard for will now save so many babies' lives. Knowing that they will have the chance to live full healthy, happy lives makes it all worthwhile. We would like to thank Senator Valesky for all the support he has given us throughout our time advocating for this bill to be passed."

"Today, Jacob is a happy and healthy little boy thanks to a simple test that detected a serious threat to his life," Sen. Valesky said. "I was pleased to support legislation that will insure every newborn receives the same potentially life-saving test."

Pulse oximetry screenings are non-invasive, painless, and take approximately one minute to perform. According to the United States Secretary of Health and Human Services' Advisory Committee on Heritable Disorders in Newborns and Children, congenital heart disease affects approximately seven to nine of every 1,000 live births in the United States. In addition, the federal Centers for Disease Control and Prevention states that congenital heart defects are the leading cause of infant death due to birth defects, and that about 4,800 babies born every year have CCHDs.

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