

Jane Smilie, MPH, Administrator
Public Health and Safety Division
Montana Department of Public Health and Human Services
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Testimony in support of House Bill 28: AN ACT REVISING THE FETAL, INFANT, AND CHILD MORTALITY PREVENTION ACT TO ALLOW FOR REVIEW OF MATERNAL MORTALITY

Presented to the House Human Services Committee, Monday, January 21, 2013

Good afternoon. I am Jane Smilie, Administrator of the Public Health and Safety Division. The Department of Public Health and Human Services supports the addition of Maternal Mortality Review to the existing Fetal, Infant, and Child Mortality Review. We are pleased that our colleagues in the medical and particularly the obstetric professions have brought this bill to you. As you know, the goal of both the Fetal, Infant, and Child Mortality Review and the proposed Maternal Mortality Review is to review recent deaths to learn lessons about ways to prevent future deaths. Maternal mortality review is a process that has been essential to the dramatic decrease in maternal mortality during the past century. In 1900 in the U.S., the maternal mortality rate was more than 800 deaths per 100,000 population. However, careful investigation and identification of preventable causes made it possible to decrease that rate to 37/100,000 by 1960 and to 10/100,000 by 1990. Continued careful review of maternal deaths can keep the rate low and drive it even lower.

Based on data from the last 13 years, there is an average of nine pregnancy-associated deaths per year in Montana, using the definition of "during pregnancy or within one year after the end of pregnancy." Approximately 40% of those deaths are attributable to obstetric causes. An additional one third are caused by unintentional injuries, which are among the most potentially preventable causes of death. To put this in perspective, women who have been pregnant within the past year die of injuries three times more often than women of the same age who have not been pregnant, and in particular they die of motor vehicle accidents in which they are the drivers four times more often.

Review will allow medical and public health professionals to learn valuable lessons that will contribute to preventing future deaths.

Thank you. I am here to answer questions, as is my colleague Dr. Carol Ballew, our state epidemiologist.