

House Republican Press Release

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Sawyer: Danbury Infant Death Shows Greater Need to Promote Safe Havens Law



HARTFORD- The arrest of a teen mother in Danbury under charges that she murdered her infant child highlight the need for a program such as Safe Havens, and the need to promote it widely Representative Pamela Z. Sawyer (R-Bolton) said today.

“While the investigation into this incident is ongoing, and we do not have all the facts yet, it appears that the teenage girl under arrest may have been a teen mother in desperate circumstances,” said Sawyer. “As a result, a newborn baby has died. The Safe Havens program was designed to prevent this kind of tragedy, and we need to continue to get the word out to women who find themselves pregnant, and in dire straits.”

The Safe Haven program, which was sponsored by Representative Sawyer, was enacted in 2000 by the Connecticut General Assembly. It was created to encourage young women to bring their infant babies to hospital rooms rather than abandon them, where they may not be found until too late. Under this law, the parent may voluntarily give up the baby when it is up to 30 days old, to the staff of an emergency room. The parent will not be charged for abandonment. This allows the parent freedom from prosecution, and enables the child to be placed for adoption. The parents’ privacy is protected, and they are not asked their names.

As of April, 2006, seven babies have been saved by the Safe Haven program. The Department of Children and Families renewed their efforts to promote this program earlier in the year, distributing 65,000 pamphlets to middle and high schools in all 169 municipalities. The department will circulate the pamphlets again this year with a promotional poster.

“Tragedies like this are so unnecessary and preventable,” said Sawyer. “We need to continue to get the word out to young mothers who feel that they have nowhere to turn. It is such a needless waste when these girls perform a desperate act that can ruin their life, and possibly end another innocent one. These girls and their babies are protected by this very simple law.”

Sawyer noted that she intended to introduce legislation this session which would authorize \$50,000 to assist the Department of Children and Families in media outreach to make young women aware of the program.

