

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
Re: MISSing Angels Bill signed into law
by Gov. Jane Dee Hull

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Phoenix, Ariz. --- With the recent unanimous passage of a bill in its Senate, Arizona has become the first state in the nation to take a positive step in changing the way stillbirths are viewed. The MISSing Angels Bill (HB 2416) will be signed into law by Gov. Jane Dee Hull in a public ceremony set for **11:25 a.m. June 11, 2001 at 1700 West Washington on the 9th Floor of the Governor's office.**

The new law mandates that, instead of being issued a "Certificate of Fetal Death" upon delivering a stillborn baby, the mother will receive a "Certificate of Birth Resulting in Stillbirth."

The change might not seem significant to many. However, those who have experienced the anguish of losing a baby – whether at 30 weeks gestation or full-term – can vouch that HB 2416 is an important step allowing grieving parents the same respect given to the woman leaving the hospital with a healthy infant in her arms.

"The 'Certificate of Fetal Death' was a cruel reminder of a woman's failure to produce a healthy, living baby," said Joanne Cacciatore, executive director of the MISS Foundation and champion of the bill. "Women who endure the experience of stillbirth must still go through childbirth. They are emotionally invested in their babies, and that does not change when a baby is stillborn. They still are *mothers*. The passage of this bill is a huge step in the right direction."

Sen. Sue Gerard (R-Dist. 18), chair of the Senate Health Committee, agreed. "The passage of this bill will give much-needed respect to those who have experienced the stillbirth of a child," Gerard noted. "It may even be the first step toward increased knowledge about the causes of stillbirth. In addition, it makes Arizona the first state in what hopefully will be a national trend toward recognizing the significance of this tragedy."

Already, Massachusetts and Iowa have similar bills in place in their state

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legislatures, and supporters in Michigan, Florida, and Indiana also are pushing for legislation.

Approximately 39,000 babies are stillborn each year in the United States. The cause of death for more than half the number of full-term (40-week) stillbirths is unknown, even after autopsy.

Cacciatore expects many of the bill's lobbyists – a coalition of community professionals and MISS Foundation parents of stillborn babies – will be present at the public signing.

“It is a huge victory for all of us who have experienced this tragedy,” Cacciatore said. “The issuance of this certificate and the public awareness it brings certainly will have implications on the statistical, medical, social and psychological effects of giving birth to a dead baby.

“As Martin Luther King Jr. said, ‘It is always the right time to do the right thing.’ This is the right thing, and it is a change long overdue.”