

Castle, Christiana Care & Delaware March of Dimes Team Up to Prevent Prematurity - - December 13, 2006

Wilmington, DE -- Delaware Congressman Mike Castle, a leader in the fight against infant mortality since his time as Governor of Delaware, today joined the Delaware March of Dimes in touring Christiana Care's Neonatal Intensive Care Unit and announcing the upcoming signing of the PREEMIE Act into law.

"The Prematurity Research Expansion and Education for Mothers Who Deliver Infants Early Act" -- of which Castle is an original cosponsor -- is designed to expand research into the causes and prevention of prematurity and to increase education and support services related to premature birth. Both the House and Senate gave their final stamp of approval to this legislation this past Friday.

"Prematurity is a silent health crisis. Preterm delivery can happen to any pregnant woman, and in nearly one-half of the cases, no one knows why. But one thing we do know is that prematurity is the number one cause of infant mortality. And Delaware's infant mortality rate is the 6th highest in the nation -- with an average of 9 deaths per 1,000 live births. And over the years it has been increasing, not decreasing," Castle said.

"This bill -- which will be signed into law shortly -- will take important steps to reduce the rates of preterm labor and delivery and promote the use of evidence based care for pregnant women at risk of preterm labor and for infants born preterm with the ultimate goal of reducing infant mortality and disabilities caused by prematurity."

PREEMIE ACT PROVISIONS:

Expands federal research related to preterm labor and delivery and increasing public and provider education and support services.

Creates demonstration projects through HHS to educate health professionals and the public on the signs of preterm labor, good nutrition, smoking cessation, stress management, as well as programs to improve treatment and outcomes for premature babies.

Authorizes grants for Neonatal Intensive Care Unit Family Support programs for family counseling needs.

Calls for a Surgeon General's Conference to bring scientific and clinical experts from the public and private sector to formulate a national agenda on preterm labor and delivery.

As Governor, Castle initiated the following targeted and community based programs to reduce the state's high number of infant deaths by one-third from 1985 levels:

"Focus on the First 60 Months,"

"Smart Start,"

"Diamond Deliveries" for substance abusing pregnant women

"Tiny Steps" at the West End Neighborhood House in Wilmington

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