



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Timothy M. Kennedy

## Senator Kennedy Announces Governor Signs Certificate of Still Birth into Law

TIMOTHY M. KENNEDY September 24, 2011

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*Long-delayed bill becoming law means a sense of closure to families of a stillborn child*

BUFFALO, N.Y. – Senator Timothy M. Kennedy, D-58th District, announced Governor Andrew Cuomo has signed the Certificate of Still Birth bill (S.3111B) into law. The legislation, which Senator Kennedy co-sponsored, creates the Certificate of Still Birth to help provide a sense of closure to families enduring the stillbirth of a child.

After nearly a decade of delay when the bill was stuck in the State Legislature, the Certificate of Still Birth bill finally made it to the Governor's desk for his signature. The original legislation was first introduced in 2003. Since then, it is estimated that 16,000 children have been stillborn in New York State – leaving 16,000 mothers without the option of state recognition of their child's birth.

In the past, when a child was stillborn, the state only issued a fetal death certificate – which left many families feeling that the state did not recognize their stillborn child ever existing. A Certificate of Still Birth will serve as state recognition of the child's birth and life.

Stillbirth affects thousands of families every year, and the Certificate of Still Birth issue has been especially close to Senator Kennedy's heart. With the help of other advocates, Senator Kennedy relentlessly drove the issue forward – fueled by his own personal experience.

Senator Kennedy and his wife lost their daughter, Brigid, soon after she was born. They were more fortunate than other families, as they were able to spend a few moments with Brigid before she passed away. Nonetheless, the loss was traumatic. Sadly, other close members of Senator Kennedy's family have lost a child to stillbirth.

Driven by these personal experiences, Senator Kennedy made it a priority to break the logjam in the Legislature and help deliver a little bit of closure to families suffering stillbirth through the approval of the Certificate of Still Birth bill.

“Losing a child to stillbirth is an emotional roller coaster – the excitement and anticipation of expecting a new baby followed by the deep pain and sadness of losing your son or daughter. Add the physical pain of giving birth, and mothers especially are left feeling an indescribable amount of distress and hurt,” Senator Kennedy said. “Families search out closure, but for

years, the state has refused to help provide that closure in the form of a Certificate of Still Birth. This new law is a long overdue change that families deserve for their lost child.

“With so many families experiencing such tragic loss every year, the Certificate of Still Birth was the least we could do to help heal the pain that families endure after a stillbirth,” he added. “It took a lot of work to finally pass this law, and I thank Still Parents NY and Western New York Perinatal Bereavement Network for driving the issue forward with their persistent call for action.”

Under the new law, a mother, upon the stillbirth of a child, will have the option of receiving a Certificate of Still Birth or simply a Certificate of Fetal Death.