



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Shelley B. Mayer

Senator Mayer and Assemblyman David Buchwald announce Tax Credit Initiative For Affected Parents on Pregnancy & Infant Loss Awareness Day

SHELLEY B. MAYER October 15, 2019

| ISSUE: **PREGNANCY, INFANT LOSS AWARENESS MONTH, TAX CREDIT INITIATIVE**



WHITE PLAINS, NY -- On Tuesday, October 15th, Senator Shelley B. Mayer, Assemblyman David Buchwald, representatives from the Star Legacy Foundation and others gathered with affected parents and advocates at White Plains Hospital to commemorate Pregnancy & Infant Loss Awareness Day and Month.

Senator Mayer and Assemblyman Buchwald announced new legislation to provide a \$2,000 refundable tax credit to parents who suffer the birth of a stillborn child. Estimates show that 1 in 160 pregnancies ends in a stillborn child, and two-thirds of stillbirths remain unexplained. This devastating experience leaves parents with financial costs, as well as emotional and social ones. S.3709/A.7468 provides parents with a tax credit to offset the financial expenses associated with the stillbirth and an acknowledgement of the loss experienced by the family.

Samantha Banerjee represented the Star Legacy Foundation as Vice Chair of the Star Legacy NY Metro Chapter and an affected parent and advocate. The Star Legacy Foundation is a non-profit dedicated to reducing pregnancy loss & neonatal death and improving care for families who experience such tragedies.

State Senator Shelley B. Mayer (D-Westchester) said, "Parents who have experienced the tragedy of a stillbirth have gone through unspeakable pain. I have met with leaders from the Star Legacy Foundation many times and have heard their devastating stories of love and loss. They deserve acknowledgement for their experiences and for the many costs they incur as a result of their tragic loss. I am glad to recognize Pregnancy & Infant Loss Awareness Day and sponsor legislation to provide financial relief--a \$2,000 refundable tax credit--to families who have experienced a stillbirth."

"Nothing can erase the torment that comes with the birth of a stillborn child, but as elected representatives, it is our responsibility to try and bring fairness to the law and to recognize families who must deal with these tragic situations," said **State Assemblyman David Buchwald (D-Westchester)**. "This tax credit bill, which I proudly carry with Senator Mayer, can at least ease the financial burden on families that go through such troubling circumstances. I thank the Star Legacy Foundation for their tireless advocacy on behalf of these families."

Samantha Banerjee, Vice Chair of the Star Legacy Foundation, NY Metro Chapter, said, "When my daughter was unexpectedly stillborn just two days before her due date in 2013, we faced all the same costs that any other expectant family does: crib, car seat, hospital delivery, etc. But then we came home without our daughter and the bills kept piling up, for things no parent should ever have to pay for: funeral, burial, headstone, autopsy, genetic testing, grief support. We were more fortunate than many bereaved families in that our medical insurance covered some of these costs, but even so, by what should have been our baby's first birthday, we were several thousand dollars in a hole. To add insult to injury, our dismayed accountant had to break it to us that our baby didn't even qualify as a dependent on our taxes; since she hadn't taken a first breath, unlike other babies who sadly die in their first year of life, she did not 'count' in the eyes of NY State. It was as if she never existed at all - just one more devastating blow on top of all the heartbreak."

Ms. Banerjee continued, "There are some truly incredible bereavement support resources in our area, but there was no one investing in the research and education necessary to actually prevent stillbirths from happening. We founded the NY Metro Chapter - Star Legacy Foundation's first chapter outside the Minnesota headquarters - in 2015 to fill that gap. We are a coalition of families and health professionals working to reduce the incidence of stillbirth, promote healthy pregnancies, and ensure that any family who loses a baby gets the support they deserve. In addition to grief support resources, we are also driving progress on research through our biennial Stillbirth Summit conference and the newly launched Pregnancy Research Project, and we offer low-cost training for medical providers in bereavement care and stillbirth prevention. Too many families suffer in silence, but with stillbirth affecting 1 in 160 pregnancies and pregnancy/infant loss impacting 1 in 4 women, there is no reason that anyone should go through the devastation of losing a baby alone. And the more we raise awareness, the more of these babies we can save."

Part of the Star Legacy Foundation's mission is to ensure financial support for affected families and changes to insurance coverage to include testing following a stillbirth. The Star Legacy Foundation believes that there are many common denominators to stillbirth, neonatal death, birth injury, premature birth, and miscarriages, and advocates for research to find the answers.