



State Representative Timothy DeGeeter

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**Rep. DeGeeter Seeks to Expand Ohio's "Safe Haven" Law**  
*Lawmaker's Goal: Protect Newborns*

**PARMA** – State Representative Timothy DeGeeter (D-Parma) today introduced legislation that would expand Ohio's "safe haven" law and save more newborn babies from abuse and neglect.

The bill would extend the time period to drop off a baby to a designated location – no questions asked – from the current 72 hours to 144 hours after childbirth. It also requires that students learn about "safe haven" as part of their high school health curriculum.

Rep. DeGeeter outlined his plan at Parma Community General Hospital, where a young mother dropped off a six-hour-old girl two months ago. It was the second newborn brought to the hospital since the law took effect in 2001.

"Protecting children in danger of abandonment or worse should be one of our top priorities," Rep. DeGeeter said. "This legislation will give more children chances at better lives."

Rep. DeGeeter has a special stake in this legislation. He himself was adopted, and he and his wife are expecting their first child.

"Every child born into this world deserves a chance to develop and grow into someone special," Rep. DeGeeter said. "Expanding the window in the 'safe haven' law may be the difference between life and death for some of these babies."

Cuyahoga County Director of Children and Family Services James McCafferty supports the idea.

"We see new mothers who feel they have no place to turn," McCafferty said. "Some of these mothers have killed or abandoned their babies. 'Safe haven' gives them an alternative that saves the child."

According to the Ohio Department of Job and Family Services, 54 newborns have been surrendered since Ohio's law became effective in 2001. Forty-eight states have enacted "safe haven" laws since Texas first offered the program in 1999.

Rep. DeGeeter's bill now awaits assignment to a House committee for formal hearings.