

# State still struggles with infant mortality

**The Baltimore Sun**

Letter to the Editor

January 26, 2009

Frank D. Roylance's article "CDC reports a sudden uptick in births, along with some troubling medical details" (Jan. 18) does point out "some worrisome changes in recent childbirth patterns across the nation." However, the idea that "Maryland women generally scored as well as or better than the national average" may give Maryland health care providers and state legislators an ill-founded sense of complacency.

In 2007, 112 babies in Baltimore died before their first birthday. And, as Mr. Roylance's article suggests, there are still sharp contrasts in birth outcomes for whites and minorities; infant mortality in Baltimore still disproportionately affects African-Americans.

Nearly as tragic is the number of babies born pre-term, those with low birth weights and those who live with chronic health problems throughout their lives.

And in Baltimore, African-American babies are twice as likely to have low birth weights as other infants.

Many factors can contribute to poor birth outcomes. However, one thing is certain: Healthier women have a better chance of having healthier babies.

And since 50 percent of pregnancies are still unplanned, it's important for women to have reliable health care throughout their child-bearing years.

That is why Planned Parenthood of Maryland is joining with the statewide Babies Born Healthy initiative to emphasize the importance of health care before a pregnancy occurs.

We believe that the Babies Born Healthy initiative can significantly impact future generations and hope that the General Assembly will support sustained funding for this crucial program.

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