



P. O. Box 1697
Little Rock, Arkansas 72203-1697
(501) 663-4237
www.artl.org
artl4237@att.net

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FOR MORE INFORMATION:

Rose Mimms, Executive Director
501-663-4237 or 501-920-2276

PRESS RELEASE

Arkansas Right to Life announces the first installment of a statewide billboard campaign to promote the Safe Haven Law and Safe Haven Baby Boxes in all 75 counties in Arkansas. On June 14th the first billboard went live in Harrison, Arkansas at 801 Highway 62-65N.

The Safe Haven Law first enacted in Arkansas in 2001, is designed to protect babies from being hurt, or killed from abandonment by parents who are unwilling or unable to parent. Under this law a parent may give up an infant anonymously at a hospital emergency room or law enforcement agency, but in 2019 the law was amended to include manned fire stations as a surrender location. The amended law, Act 185, sponsored by Senator Cecile Bledsoe (R-D3) and Representative Rebecca Petty (R-D94) also approved the installation of Safe Haven Baby Boxes at surrender locations.

The law is set to take effect on July 24, 2019. The billboard campaign's purpose is 3-fold: to educate the general public and parents about the Safe Haven Law, to advise manned Fire Departments that they are now an official surrender location and to promote the option of Safe Haven Baby Boxes for those parents who want or need total anonymity in the safe surrender of their baby. The first Safe Haven Box in Arkansas is set to be dedicated in September.

Monica Kelsey, founder of Safe Haven Baby Boxes, testified before the Arkansas Senate Public Health Committee and brought a Safe Haven Baby Box with her to the Arkansas State Capitol for inspection as to the safety and need of total anonymity for these parents. Abandoned as an infant and adopted herself she has made it her life mission to protect mothers and babies.

Every state has a Safe Haven Law but the provisions vary. The Arkansas Safe Haven Law allows a parent to bring a child 30 days old or younger to an official surrender location without facing prosecution of endangerment and abandonment of a child. The law does not prohibit prosecution for abuse or neglect of the child that occurred before the child was given up to a medical provider or law enforcement agency. Once a baby is surrendered, the Arkansas Department of Human Services Division of Children and Family Services will be contacted immediately and the child treated medically. DCFS will assume responsibility for the child and place the child with a forever family.

The DCFS maintains a website, PSA and materials in both English and Spanish to help educate the public about the Arkansas Safe Haven Law. Arkansas Right to Life joins the effort with our support of the law to add manned Fire Departments and the installation of Safe Haven Baby Boxes in Arkansas through our educational billboard campaign.

Arkansas Right to Life is the state's oldest and largest pro-life organization in Arkansas and the state affiliate of the National Right to Life Committee.