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NY Assembly Halts the Democratic Process

Albany, NY (May 23, 2011)---New York Assembly Bill A.3453, which would provide an *optional* document to acknowledge the birth of stillborn babies, has been “swept under the rug by high level legislators who are abusing their power,” according to Jeff Tieger, founder of Daniel’s Star, a nonprofit named after his son who died during birth at fullterm. For the third year in a row, the NY Senate has *overwhelmingly* passed a bill that enables families to request and pay for a Certificate of Birth Resulting in Stillbirth (CBRS) (59 to 2) for babies who die during or just prior to birth. Yet, despite the bill’s overwhelming public and legislative popularity, it continues to be held in the Assembly Ways & Means Committee. Surprisingly, 20 of the 35 members of this committee are actually sponsors of the bill. The CBRS will have no negative fiscal impact on the state but rather will accrue revenue through certificate fees.

Since 2008, parents across New York State have worked diligently and have acquired an overwhelming majority of support from Assembly members. There are 81 Assembly sponsors – both Democrats and Republicans – yet the bill has never had a floor vote. “Our legislative system is purportedly fair and balanced,” notes Paige Ricci, co-leader of Still Parents NY, a grassroots effort to pass the CBRS bill. “How is the voice of a few given more weight than the voice of many? Where is the democratic process?”

There is a global lack of awareness of this public health crisis and its impact on women and families according to the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation who sponsored a recent series in The Lancet dedicated to raising global awareness of stillbirth. More than 1,700 families suffer this tragedy every year in New York State. “That’s nearly ten times more babies are stillborn every year than die of SIDS in New York State” according to Dr. Joanne Cacciatore, CEO of the MISS Foundation, an international nonprofit group that aids families of children who have died. “This is the ultimate woman’s issue. It’s time to do what is right for New York women and their families.”

“A CBRS is important to many families, “ says Tieger. “Parents expect their legislators to listen to the voice of the people and allow a full Assembly vote on A.3453 *now*.”

For more information on the MISSing Angels Bill visit www.missingangelsbill.org or www.DanielsSTAR.org.