

COUNTY OF KANE



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Congresswoman Lauren Underwood Visits Kane County Health Department to Discuss Maternal and Infant Mortality and the Kane Kares Home Visiting Program

Congresswoman Lauren Underwood visited the Kane County Health Department (KCHD) on Wednesday, August 14, 2024, to discuss maternal and infant mortality rates. The visit also highlighted the Kane Kares Home Visiting Program, a cornerstone of the county's efforts to support expectant and new mothers.

During her visit, Congresswoman Underwood met with parent participants in the Kane Kares program, KCHD Executive Director Michael Isaacson, Jenny Harper, and Megan Adamczewski from the Nurse-Family Partnership National Service Office, KCHD public health nurses, and other staff. They discussed the rates of maternal and infant mortality, particularly among communities of color, and the need for policy solutions and community-based interventions.

A public health nurse herself, Underwood stressed the importance of addressing disparities in maternal and infant health through programs like Kane Kares, which provides in-home support to expectant mothers and families with newborns, offering education, resources, and personalized care plans. The Kane County Health Department program is unique in that it is the only home visiting program of its kind in Kane County that pairs expecting mothers with a registered nurse. Nurses match with families from pregnancy through age two, making vital connections between new parents and community resources. Since its inception, Kane Kares has been at the forefront of supporting parental roles in child development, with the goals of reducing rates of low birth weight, prematurity, and infant mortality, and promoting optimal well-child care and family bonding.

Parent participants in the program shared how having a nurse they can call with questions helped them feel informed during their pregnancy and confident in their parenting skills once their children were born. Parents noted that they often don't have local family members available to provide support, and their nurse filled that role, offering personalized care and resources tailored to the needs of their family. They added that KCHD nurses Kristy Brown and Jill Zolfo are considered part of their families.

Michael Isaacson stated, "Kane Kares is about more than just healthcare; it's about building relationships and providing comprehensive support to our families. We are grateful for Congresswoman Underwood's support and advocacy." The visit is part of Congresswoman Underwood's ongoing efforts to address health disparities and improve health outcomes for mothers and infants. Her commitment to maternal and child health is reflected in her work as co-founder of the U.S. House of Representatives Black Maternal Health Caucus, where she has introduced and supported legislation aimed at reducing maternal mortality and improving maternal care nationwide.

The Kane County Health Department is dedicated to protecting and promoting the health of all Kane County residents and invites first-time parents to join this supportive network and get matched with a caring and knowledgeable KCHD nurse. The program remains dedicated to its mission of empowering parents and enhancing early childhood development, ensuring a brighter future for all children in the county.

For more information about the Kane Kares program, visit <https://www.kanehealth.com/Pages/Kane-Kares.aspx> or call (224) 227-4476. Bilingual staff are available.