

Learning from Saul's Light

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This summer I have been interning with Saul's light. [Saul's Light](#) is a local nonprofit that provides emotional support and financial assistance to families with babies in the neonatal intensive care unit (NICU) and those who have lost a child shortly after birth. Their outreach also includes offering one-on-one and group peer support, the Little Library reading program, and community education and advocacy, among others. With the founder and executive director, Kimberly Novod, I have been working on initiating and writing legislation for a Stillbirth Tax Deduction to be implemented in Louisiana. Currently, 7 states are providing this money to families

for the tax-year in which the stillbirth occurred. This money is subsidizing the costs of medical bills, funeral costs, psychological support, and more financial burdens that come with a stillbirth.

Simply put, a tax deduction for the birth of a stillborn baby acknowledges the birth of the child and allows families to claim their baby as a dependent for the year. A baby born at 17 weeks with a heartbeat is given a birth certificate and the parents can claim them as a dependent for that year. However, a baby born at 41 weeks who dies during birth does not qualify for a birth certificate. In Louisiana there are around 350 stillbirths a year and it is twice as likely for a black woman to experience stillbirth than a white woman. With a tax credit of \$1,200 granted to families, the stillbirth tax credit would cost the government roughly \$420,000 a year.

Unlike many other reproductive justice topics, a Stillbirth Tax Deduction is supported by both Anti-choice and Pro-choice groups and is politically bipartisan. So far, Louisiana Representatives, both democratic and republican have shown support for the bill. If all goes well, we will be able to formulate legislation for the bill and give it to congress by October.