***NEWS RELEASE***

For Immediate Release
May 21, 2012

CONTACT:
Karyn Price, Hamilton Strategies, 215.858.1184, 610.584.1096, kprice@hamiltonstrategies.com
Deborah Hamilton, Hamilton Strategies, 215.815.7716, 610.584.1096, DHamilton@HamiltonStrategies.com

My Baby’s DNA Went Where? CCHF Gains Minnesota Legislative Success in Newborn DNA Handling, Sets National Precedent

Citizens Council for Health Freedom Protects DNA of Minnesota Newborns

Key Facts:

- New law enhances newborn protections and upholds the Minnesota Genetic Privacy Act.
- Law requires “informed” written parental consent regarding use of leftover DNA or genetic material from routine newborn screening.
- The law also calls for hospitals and doctors to both explain and obtain consent for collection and storage of DNA in either prenatal classes or office visits, rather than during or after labor and childbirth.

ST. PAUL – Having a new baby is typically a whirlwind of emotion: unimaginable bliss coupled with anxiety and topped off with a heaping measure of sheer exhaustion often leads new parents to be less than vigilant when it comes to the in-hospital paperwork and health tests or screenings related to their new little bundle of joy. Many parents don’t even realize that their innocent newborn’s DNA is able to be collected, stored, and used by the government for genetic experimentation through the blood obtained during routine newborn health tests.

The Citizens Council for Health Freedom (CCHF), a patient education and advocacy group, recently garnered a key victory on behalf of Minnesota newborns and their families. At the close of the spring legislative session and as a result of CCHF’s work, a newborn screening amendment requiring informed parental consent about how the state can collect and use samples of newborn DNA – particularly DNA obtained through blood samples – was sent to Minnesota Governor Mark Dayton’s desk and signed into law.
“These new requirements and protections, amended onto bills by Senator David Hann (R – Eden Prairie, MN) and Representative Mary Liz Holberg (R – Lakeville, MN), will put some clearly defined legal parameters around health department access to newborn infants’ DNA,” commented Twila Brase, president of Citizen’s Council for Health Freedom, a patient-centered national health policy organization. “These new parameters will keep state officials accountable to Minnesota’s strong Genetic Privacy Act and liable for serious sanctions if violations occur.”

The amendment, which was added to part of HF 2967, establishes specific requirements related to informed parental consent, specifically:

- The Minnesota Department of Health will seek to ask parents about consent and storage of infant DNA samples obtained through routine newborn testing during the hospital visit. Instead, consent for such activities would be requested during either a prenatal doctor’s office visit or during childbirth preparation classes, and written warning forms must be physically attached to the parental consent form so that parents understand what they are signing,

- Nothing will exempt the Minnesota Department of Health from adhering to the requirements of the state’s Genetic Privacy Act. Previously, the state attempted to collect infant DNA by claiming exemption from the Act, and,

- The Minnesota Department of Health is now required to make a public announcement regarding the destruction of DNA samples collected prior to the November 2011 ruling of the Minnesota Supreme Court. The new requirements do not affect pending class action lawsuits surrounding previously collected DNA samples.

Brase warns, however, that despite the new law, parents and other citizens must continue to be cautious with regard to potential DNA issues.

“After our eight-year battle over baby DNA, we do not expect the Minnesota Department of Health to stop trying to skirt the state’s genetic privacy law,” warned Brase. “During this session, the Health Department tried in three different ways to deceive Minnesotans and exempt themselves from the Minnesota Genetic Privacy Act. For example, they argued that ‘biological specimens’ should not be considered as genetic information, even if the specimen did indeed contain genetic material. We discovered these attempts, however, and by making them known to concerned legislators, we successfully opposed them. Unrelenting vigilance is still needed.”

Twila Brase shares health care-related news with the American public in her daily, 60-second radio feature, Health Freedom Minute. Health Freedom Minute airs on the entire American Family Radio Network, with more than 150 stations nationwide, in addition to Bott Radio Network with over 80 stations nationwide. During the daily features, listeners can learn more
about the agenda behind proposed health care initiatives and policies and what they can do to protect their health care choices, rights and privacy.

Brase, a public health nurse and health care freedom advocate, informs listeners of crucial health issues, such as the intrusive wellness and prevention initiatives in Obamacare, patient privacy and the need for informed consent requirements, the dangers of “evidence-based medicine” and the implications of state and federal health care reform.

**Health Freedom Minute** is sponsored by the **Citizens’ Council for Health Freedom. CCHF** supports patient and doctor freedom, medical innovation and the right of citizens to a confidential patient-doctor relationship.

For more information about **Citizens’ Council for Health Freedom** or to sign up for the weekly **CCHF Health eNews**, visit [www.cchfreedom.org](http://www.cchfreedom.org).

###

For more information or to interview **Twila Brase**, president and co-founder of **Citizens’ Council for Health Freedom**, contact Karyn Price, Hamilton Strategies, 215.858.1184, 610.584.1096, or kprice@hamiltonstrategies.com; or Michael Hamilton, Hamilton Strategies, 215.519.4838, 610.584.1096, or MHamilton@HamiltonStrategies.com.

**Twila Brase** is president and co-founder of the **Citizens’ Council for Health Freedom**. She has been called one of the “100 Most Powerful People in Health Care” and one of “Minnesota’s 100 Most Influential Health Care Leaders.” The Council’s efforts have stopped government-issued treatment directives, added informed consent requirements for access to patient data and defeated a proposed Health Insurance Exchange. Brase’s daily radio commentary, **Health Freedom Minute**, is a 60-second radio address on pressing health care issues. She has been interviewed by CNN, Fox News, Minnesota Public Radio, NBC Nightly News, NBC’s Today Show, NPR, New York Public Radio, the Associated Press, Modern Healthcare, TIME, The Wall Street Journal, The Washington Post and The Washington Times, among others.