



NEWS RELEASE

For Immediate Release
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CCHF Responds to MDH Press Release on Baby DNA

St. Paul/Minneapolis—Today, the Minnesota Department of Health issued a press release on their plan to begin destroying baby DNA as required by the Minnesota Supreme Court. Twila Brase, president of Citizens' Council for Health Freedom, provides the following comments:

"As opposed to Commissioner Ehlinger's quote, the newborn residual bloodspots are not a 'valuable public health resource,' they are the DNA of every newborn citizen, which the Department has been claiming as theirs. They've been storing, using, and sharing them for research without the consent of parents. It would be illegal for the State to collect and store the DNA of adults, but they have been doing it to up-and-coming adults, in other words, newborns, without authority and in violation of state law for years.

"The bloodspots, containing the unique genetic code of every baby born since at least July 1, 1997, have been considered state government property. Citizen DNA is not government property. Citizen DNA is the private property of the individual. It holds secrets and information that even the individual might not want to know, and certainly may not want to share with the government and others.

"The MN Supreme Court ruled that MDH never had the authority to store, use or share Baby DNA, before or after the 2006 genetic privacy act was enacted.

"MDH has been keeping baby DNA primarily for genetic research. Experts in newborn screening, writing in journals, have noted that after 6 months, the newborn screening metabolites in the bloodspots disintegrate leaving only the DNA and thus, these experts note, newborn bloodspots kept longer than 6 months are stored for research purposes.

"With at least 70,000 children being born each year, the State of Minnesota has the DNA of more than 1 million citizens on file. The parents never gave consent and most parents have no idea that the DNA was taken and kept after birth."

"It is very troubling that the State says they plan to seek changes to the state genetic privacy act. The act requires written informed consent for collection, storage, use, and dissemination of genetic information. The State's legislative plan likely means that the Department wants to undo the act's consent requirements -- and the Supreme Court decision. This must not happen."

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