



**STATE OF MISSISSIPPI
DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE AND COMMERCE**

ANDY GIPSON
COMMISSIONER

PRESS RELEASE

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Commissioner Andy Gipson Participates in Blessing of First-Ever Safe Haven Baby Box Placed at a Mississippi Hospital

JACKSON, Miss. – Today, Commissioner of Agriculture and Commerce Andy Gipson participated in a blessing ceremony for the first-ever Safe Haven Baby Box to be placed at a Mississippi hospital. The Baby Box, located at Simpson General Hospital in Mendenhall, is the first of its kind at an emergency services hospital and health care facility in the state.

“This is the second such box instituted in Mississippi, but the first of its kind at a hospital,” said Commissioner Gipson. “To date, 40 babies have been surrendered to Safe Haven Baby Boxes across the U.S. and this additional Baby Box located in our own backyard is a positive step in the right direction for Mississippians. This unique initiative legally permits a mother in crisis to safely, securely and anonymously surrender their newborn if they are unable to care for them. I pray this Baby Box will be used in a mighty way and that many lives will be rescued.”

The Safe Haven Baby Box at Simpson General Hospital was funded entirely by private donations from the Mendenhall and Simpson County community. Starting today, the Baby Box will be available 24/7.

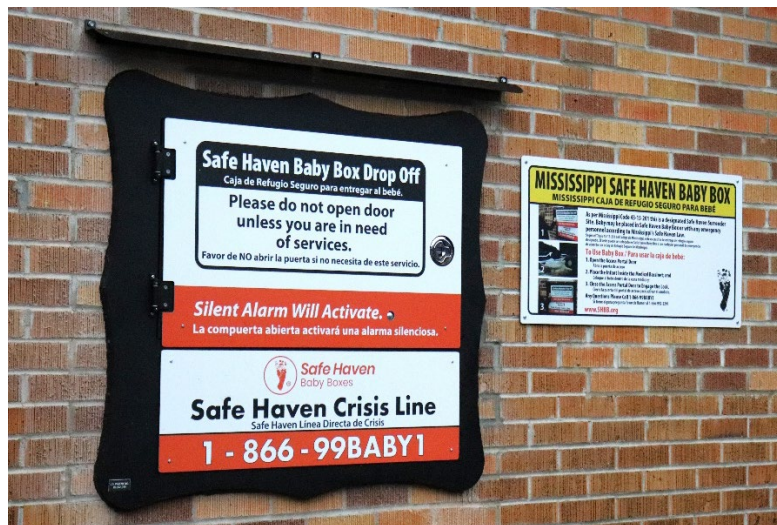
Prior to serving as Agriculture Commissioner, in 2018, then-State Representative Gipson served as the Committee Chairman who handled and passed House Bill 1510 resulting in the United States Supreme Court’s *Dobbs* decision overturning *Roe v. Wade*. The *Dobbs* decision rendered by the court in 2022 has resulted in ending abortion on demand in Mississippi and many other states nationwide, saving thousands of babies’ lives.

“This is an issue that is near and dear to my heart, and in many ways, I feel that it has come full circle. When I served as a state legislator, I felt compelled to bring the bill forward that would ultimately overturn *Roe v. Wade*. Every single child is precious in God’s sight, and the people of Mississippi are committed to helping the babies that have been born and will continue to be born since the Supreme Court’s decision. We welcome and cherish every baby born. We want the mothers to know they have an option to bring their child here where they will be cared for, loved and placed in a loving home. And I believe today’s historic milestone with the unveiling of this Safe Haven Baby Box is just one of the next steps in Mississippi’s march toward embracing a culture of life,” continued Commissioner Gipson.

Safe Haven Baby Boxes were started by Monica Kelsey in 2016 as an initiative to allow for the legal, safe surrender of a baby with complete anonymity for care and eventual adoption. According to the Safe Haven Baby Box Organization, if a woman chooses to surrender her infant via the Baby Box, the door locks when the mother closes the box. Alarms alert the location that a baby has been surrendered and personnel will retrieve the infant within five minutes. The infant will immediately be taken for medical evaluation and eventually placed with an adoptive family. Families seeking to adopt a Safe Haven baby should reach out to their local Department of Family Services to register for foster care with intention to adopt.

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Photos attached.



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Pictured L-R: Kaitlyn Kelly, Mississippi R.N. and Activist; Melissa Sullivan, Executive Director of the Simpson County Center for Pregnancy Choices; Commissioner Andy Gipson; and Gregg Gibbes, CEO and Administrator of Simpson General Hospital.