By Giles Bruce

The Mooresville/Decatur Times

Every year, about 600 Indiana babies die before their first birthdays. That’s enough to fill a kindergarten classroom or 8 school buses. A baby dies about every 16 hours in this state.

In Indiana, that’s the highest infant mortality rate in the nation, with more than seven babies losing their lives for every 1,000 live births. In 2014, Louisiana, Georgia and Kentucky do worse. Indiana’s northwest corner had the same rate as that trio.

Every year, around 600 Indiana babies die

That’s the momentum county health and infant care providers are trying to stop. The Indiana Legislature would be its top priority.

"You don’t want to look at this from a standpoint where you think, ‘Well, okay, we have a problem, but let’s put our heads in the sand and do nothing about it.’" Dr. Bruce said.

Nearly a decade ago, the Indiana Center for Healthy Mothers and Babies was established at IU Health and the IU School of Medicine. The idea was to tackle the issue of infant mortality.

In 2015, the third-least-cost state for infant hospitalization was Indiana at $13,776 per pack. A proposed tax on cigarettes is expected to raise $5 billion in revenue by 2018, according to a study from the American Lung Association.

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**Infant mortality in Indiana**

**What’s killing Indiana’s babies?: East Chicago has long lived in babies dying**

By Giko Bruce

Infant mortality in Indiana has been a problem both nationally and in East Chicago, most notably in the city's northwest region. East Chicago has a high infant mortality rate, which is a measure of the number of infants who die before their first birthday per 1,000 live births. East Chicago's infant mortality rate is higher than the national average, and the city's rates have been consistently higher than the state average.

East Chicago's high infant mortality rate is due to a number of factors, including poverty, lack of access to healthcare, and environmental factors such as lead exposure. Children in East Chicago are more likely to be born prematurely, and they are also more likely to die in their first year of life. East Chicago has a high rate of infant mortality, and the city's rates have been higher than the state average.

East Chicago's high infant mortality rate is a matter of great concern for the city's residents, and there are efforts underway to address the problem. The city has formed a coalition of community leaders, healthcare providers, and other stakeholders to work on reducing infant mortality rates in the city.

In recent years, East Chicago has made progress in reducing infant mortality rates. The city has implemented programs to improve access to healthcare, including the expansion of Medicaid and Other State Assistance (MOSAIC) programs.

In addition, the city has implemented programs to address environmental factors, including lead exposure. The city has established a lead-abatement program to remove lead from homes and businesses, and it has also implemented programs to reduce exposure to other environmental toxins.

Despite these efforts, East Chicago's infant mortality rate remains high, and there is still much work to be done to reduce the number of infants who die before their first birthday. The city continues to work with community leaders, healthcare providers, and other stakeholders to address the problem and improve outcomes for all babies in the city.