

July 12, 2022

The Honorable Frank Pallone
Chair
House Energy & Commerce Committee
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Cathy McMorris-Rodgers
Ranking Member
House Energy & Commerce Committee
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Anna Eshoo
Chairwoman
House Energy & Commerce Committee
Subcommittee on Health
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Brett Guthrie
Ranking Member
House Energy & Commerce Committee
Subcommittee on Health
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chairman Pallone, Ranking Member McMorris-Rodgers, Chairwoman Eshoo, and Ranking Member Guthrie:

We the undersigned support the following legislation introduced in the 117th Congress and referred to the Energy and Commerce Committee, and we urge you to hold a hearing on these two bills this year:

Midwives for Maximizing Optimal Maternity Services (Midwives for MOMS) Act (H.R. 3352) This legislation will address maternity care provider shortages in rural and underserved areas throughout the country with a goal of improving maternal and child health outcomes, especially among underrepresented Black, Indigenous, Latinx and Asian women, and scale up and diversify the midwifery workforce. This bill will establish two new funding streams for accredited midwifery education programs under Health Resource and Services Administration's Title VII Health Professions Training Program and Title VIII Nursing Workforce Development Programs. Grant funding would be prioritized for midwifery programs whose students commit to practicing in a maternity care provider shortage area upon graduation and certification and/or are from underrepresented groups. Funding could also be awarded to programs to help preceptors who train midwifery students, and funding could also be awarded to colleges and universities, including HBCUs, for the establishment or expansion of midwifery education programs.

Poor birth outcomes, overuse of obstetric procedures, and high costs of care require urgent action by Congress to improve quality and lower costs associated with maternal health care. Up to 50% of maternal deaths could be prevented based on quality-of-care improvements at the patient, system, and provider levels.¹ A scaling up and diversifying of midwifery-led care can lead to a significant improvement in birth outcomes.² Studies have

found that women cared for by midwives have excellent birth outcomes, including lower episiotomy, cesarean birth, and preterm birth rates.³

Providing scholarship opportunities to a more diverse cohort of people interested in becoming midwives and providing evidence-based midwifery care is essential to any comprehensive expansion in midwifery participation in our nation's maternal care continuum. Please contact Debbie Jessup in Representative Roybal-Allard's office at Debbie.jessup@mail.house.gov or Adrianna Lagorio in Representative Herrera Beutler's office at adrianna.lagorio@mail.house.gov.

Birth Access Benefiting Improved Essential Facility Services Act (BABIES) Act (H.R.3337). The bill would establish a Medicaid demonstration program to develop and advance innovative payment models for freestanding birth center services for women with a low-risk pregnancy. The BABIES Act would set up demonstration model Birth and Health Centers in 6 states. The demonstration would consist of implementing prospective payment systems for care provided in these facilities. The demonstration also will include in-depth evaluation of the centers, their outcomes, and realized savings to the Medicaid program. The goal will be to provide access to high quality midwifery-led care to more women who currently lack this care..

Childbearing people of color, particularly Black/African Americans, Native Americans, and people of lower socioeconomic status, including those living in rural and inner-city areas, experience disparities during and after childbirth with higher rates of poor outcomes for both mothers and infants. Rates for maternal mortality and morbidity, infant mortality, preterm and low birth weight births are all significantly higher among vulnerable populations. Midwifery-led care in the birth center has been shown through the Strong Start for Mothers and Newborns evaluation to improve outcomes for mothers and infants, lowering preterm birth, low birth weight, and cesarean births. Increasing access for more women will lead to better health. Please contact Woo Lim in Representative Katherine Clarke's office at Woo.lim@mail.house.gov.

Freestanding birth centers were overwhelmed by requests for services during the pandemic as many sought to stay away from acute care facilities due to infection concerns related to COVID-19. Birth centers met the increase in demand and once again showed that our health care system will benefit from increasing access to midwives, evidence based midwifery-led care, and freestanding birth centers.

The United States has the highest burden of maternal and neonatal death among high-income countries, and yet midwifery remains underused as a proven strategy to improve outcomes and increase access to care. To this end, we strongly encourage the committee

to hold a hearing on these two critical pieces of legislation, *the Midwives for MOMS Act* (H.R. 3352) and *the BABIES Act* (H.R. 3337) during this Congress.

Thank you for considering our request. We look forward to working with the committee on policy solutions that improve maternal and child health in the United States.

Sincerely,

American Association of Birth Centers
American College of Nurse-Midwives
National Association of Professional Midwives
2020 Mom
Accreditation Commission for Midwifery Education
American Association of Colleges of Nursing
American Nurses Association
Ancient Song Doula Services
Association of Maternal & Child Health Programs
Black Mamas Matter Alliance, Inc. (BMMA)
Carpe Diem Counseling, LLC
Every Mother Counts
Frontier Nursing University
Grow Midwives, LLC
Healthy Mothers Healthy Babies PBC
HealthyWomen
ImprovingBirth
Inner Nature Therapy
LA Best Babies Network
Lamaze International
Lighting lives Counseling
March for Moms
March of Dimes
Maternal Mental Health Leadership Alliance
Mom Congress
Mom Life Counseling, LLC
MomsRising
National Association of Nurse Practitioners in Women's Health
National Association of Pediatric Nurse Practitioners
National Birth Equity Collaborative
National Health Law Program
National League for Nursing

National Partnership for Women & Families
National Rural Health Association
Pearl Psychiatry
Postpartum Support International
Postpartum Support International TN
Sacramento Maternal Mental Health Collaborative
Sisters in Birth, Inc.
The Commission for the Accreditation of Birth Centers
Wildflower Center for Emotional Health PLLC
Works of Faith Wellness and Co
Yakima Valley Memorial

¹ Howell EA, Zeitlin J. Improving hospital quality to reduce disparities in severe maternal morbidity and mortality. *Semin Perinatol*. Aug 2017;41(5):266-272.

² <https://www.marchofdimes.org/materials/Final%20midwifery%20position%20statement%20August%2029%202019.pdf>

³ DeJoy SA, Bohl MG, Mahoney K, Blake C. Estimating the Financial Impact of Reducing Primary Cesareans. *J Midwifery Womens Health*. Jan 2020;65(1):56-63.
doi:10.1111/jmwh.13010