

June 4, 2023

The Honorable Ben Ray Luján
U.S. Senate
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Lisa Murkowski
U.S. Senate
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Senator Luján and Senator Murkowski,

On behalf of the undersigned organizations which represent a cross section of maternal health care professionals, leaders in women's and public health, those providing care to underserved and rural populations, consumers, and mothers from across the nation, we write in support of the *Midwives for Maximizing Optimal Maternity Service (MOMS) Act*.

Through expanding scholarship opportunities for student midwives enrolled in accredited midwifery education programs, the *Midwives for MOMS Act* will increase access to evidence-based and culturally congruent maternity care as provided by Certified Nurse-Midwives (CNMs), Certified Midwives (CMs), and Certified Professional Midwives (CPMs). We view this legislation as integral to strategies to reduce maternal mortality and eliminate racial disparities in maternal and infant health outcomes that are particularly acute for Black, Brown, and Indigenous communities.

Numerous studies show that better integration of midwives practicing to the full extent of their accredited education, clinical training, and national certification within a team-based care model can help reduce maternal and neonatal mortality, rates of stillbirth, perineal trauma, instrumental births, intrapartum analgesia use, rates of severe blood loss, preterm birth, low birth weight, and neonatal hypothermia.ⁱ While midwifery care has been associated with more efficient use of resources and improved outcomes including increased rates of spontaneous labor, vaginal birth, and breastfeeding, midwives remain drastically underutilized in health systems within the United States.ⁱⁱ Midwives that are educated and qualified to international standards can provide 87% of services needed by mothers and newborns; however, midwives only attend roughly 10% of total US births.^{iii iv} There are several reasons for this, including the narrow workforce pipeline.

The *Midwives for MOMS Act* seeks to diversify the maternal health workforce and improve access to full-scope maternity care provided by midwives in addition to alleviating significant pressures communities and health systems are experiencing. Many women lack access to maternity care services. Maternal mortality is higher in rural and other underserved areas of the U.S., and postpartum hemorrhage rates are higher in rural hospitals. Of U.S. counties, 35% have no maternity care services and an additional 11% have limited access.^v We must do better to increase access to the broad spectrum of high-quality perinatal providers and services.

Policy efforts around improving access to maternity care and maternal health outcomes across the care continuum should include unfettered access to midwives and federal investment in accredited midwifery education. The *Midwives for MOMS Act* would prioritize grant funding for Historically Black Colleges and Universities and other Minority-Serving Institutions interested in establishing midwifery programs, as well as prioritize funding for existing programs that seek to diversify their student bodies and faculty racially and ethnically with the goal of providing access to culturally appropriate maternity care.

Now more than ever, it is critical to center evidence-based practice and increase access to maternal health care providers and services. The *Midwives for MOMS Act* is an important step

toward increasing access to and improving health outcomes for women across the United States. We are proud to endorse *the Midwives for MOMS Act* and look forward to working with Congress and the broader maternal health stakeholder community on its passage.

Sincerely,

American Association of Birth Centers
American College of Nurse-Midwives
National Association of Certified Professional Midwives
Policy Institute for Community Birth and Midwifery
Just Us Women Productions, LLC
The Doula Network
March For Moms
Improving Birth
Mamatoto Village
Every Mother Counts
National Partnership for Women & Families
Eugene Declercq, MD, Boston University School of Public Health
Elephant Circle
American Nurses Association
Association of Maternal & Child Health Programs
Black Women's Health Imperative
Midwifery Education Accreditation Council
Purchaser Business Group on Health
Mom Congress
Policy Center for Maternal Mental Health
North American Registry of Midwives
Grow Midwives LLC
Bay State Birth Coalition
The Commission for the Accreditation of Birth Centers
Commonsense Childbirth
Mamatoto
Chosen Vessels Midwifery Services
Imani Family Life Center
International Cesarean Awareness Network
CHOICES Center for Reproductive Health
Concerns of Motherhood Inc.
Spirit Of Life Midwifery
Commonsense Childbirth School of Midwifery
Moms Rising
National Black Midwives Alliance
American Association of Colleges of Nursing
Birth Equity Collaborative
Our Bodies Ourselves

ⁱ <https://journals.plos.org/plosone/article?id=10.1371/journal.pone.0192523>

ⁱⁱ https://www.cochrane.org/CD004667/PREG_midwife-led-continuity-models-care-compared-other-models-care-women-during-pregnancy-birth-and-early

ⁱⁱⁱ https://www.who.int/maternal_child_adolescent/topics/quality-of-care/midwifery/en/

^{iv} United States Department of Health and Human Services (US DHHS), Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), National Center for Health Statistics (NCHS), Division of Vital Statistics, Natality public-use data 2016-2019, on CDC WONDER Online Database, October 2020.

^v https://www.midwife.org/acnm/files/cclibraryfiles/filename/000000008249/MIDWIVES%20FOR%20MOMS_Policy%20Brief.pdf