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Vice Chairwoman Roybal-Allard Introduces Resolution to Recognize the Celebration of National Midwifery Week

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Today, **Congresswoman Lucille Roybal-Allard (CA-40)**, Vice Chair of the Labor-HHS-Education Appropriations Subcommittee, led the introduction of a resolution in the House of Representatives to recognize this week, October 4th through 10th, as National Midwifery Week 2020.

The U.S. spends significantly more per capita on childbirth than any other industrialized nation, with costs estimated well over \$50 billion. However, despite this investment, America continues to rank far behind almost all other developed countries in birth outcomes for both mothers and babies, including unacceptably high rates of maternal and infant mortality, preterm births, and severe complications of pregnancy that have adverse effects on women's health. Communities of color disproportionately experience these tragedies at birth.

The statistics become more dire when you consider that the United States is facing a growing shortage of trained maternity care providers to care for the approximately 4 million women who give birth in this country each year. The March of Dimes reports that currently more than five million US women live in a maternity care desert. An estimated 1,085 counties in the United States have hospitals without services for pregnant women, nearly half the counties in the United States do not have a single ob-gyn and 56 percent are without a certified nurse-midwife or certified midwife. And the American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists projects an Ob-Gyn shortage of 18% by the year 2030. This means that the numbers of babies born to women who do

not receive adequate prenatal care will continue to grow, putting them at increased risk for premature birth, stillbirth and early neonatal death.

“Midwives provide high-quality, evidence-based, cost-effective care and are widely cited as being an important part of the solution to addressing the problems in our maternity care system,” said Congresswoman Roybal-Allard, a member of the House Labor, Health and Human Services, and Education Appropriations Subcommittee. **“I am delighted to lead this effort to recognize the contributions of America’s certified nurse-midwives and certified midwives during National Midwifery Week. We can and must do better for moms and babies in this country and increasing access to midwifery care is one critical step to achieving better outcomes.”**

“There is a long history of research supporting the quality, cost-effectiveness and value of midwifery care to our nation’s health care system,” stated American College of Nurse-Midwives (ACNM) President Cathy Collins-Fulea, DNP, CNM, FACNM. **“Midwives across the nation should be recognized for the standard of care they provide people throughout the lifespan. ACNM has deep gratitude for our members and all of the midwives and birth workers in the trenches who continue to provide care despite the many challenges presented during these uncertain times. We are so grateful to have a champion like Representative Lucille Roybal-Allard (D-CA) in the United States Congress who understands that maternity care systems can be improved through greater access to midwives and midwifery-led care models. We applaud her efforts in recognizing the profession during National Midwifery Week.”**

Congresswoman Roybal-Allard is the author of HR 3849, the Midwives for MOMS Act, a bill to address the growing maternity care provider shortage and to improve maternity care outcomes by expanding educational opportunities for Midwives. She introduced the MOMS for the 21st Century Act in the 111th, 112th, and 113th Congresses in order to improve outcomes and bend the cost curve of our maternity care system by establishing a coordinated national focus on evidence-based maternity care; expanding data collection and research on evidence-based maternity care practices and models of care; and addressing interdisciplinary training and minority workforce recruitment. In 2015, the Congresswoman co-founded the bipartisan Caucus on Maternity Care in the House of Representatives to raise awareness about the status of childbirth in this country and the challenges facing America’s maternity care system.

The House Resolution reads:

Recognizing the roles and the contributions of America’s certified nurse-midwives and certified midwives in providing high-quality, evidence-based, cost-effective, and essential sexual and reproductive health care services to women and pregnant people.

Whereas certified nurse-midwives (CNMs) and certified midwives (CMs) are essential to America's maternal health care system, providing a wide-range of sexual and reproductive health care services for people, including the independent provision of primary care, gynecologic and contraceptive services, preconception care, care during pregnancy, childbirth and the postpartum period, and care of the normal newborn during the first 28 days of life;

Whereas CNMs and CMs care for people throughout their lifespan, from adolescence to beyond menopause, and attend approximately 10 percent of our Nation's births annually and serve as frontline essential health care providers during the COVID-19 pandemic;

Whereas midwives and midwifery-led care is evidence-based and has been shown to 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, and has furthermore been associated with more efficient use of resources and improved outcomes including increased rates of spontaneous labor, vaginal birth, and breastfeeding;

Whereas women and pregnant people who receive midwifery care have higher rates of satisfaction with their midwifery-led health care, pain relief in labor, and maternal- newborn interaction;

Whereas CNMs and CMs play an integral role in improving health outcomes for all women, pregnant people, and newborns in their communities;

Whereas midwifery care is associated with decreased pregnancy-related racial and ethnic health disparities and the profession of midwifery in the African-American community has a rich history dating back centuries;

Whereas Black, indigenous, and people of color CNMs and CMs play an integral role in improving health outcomes for women, pregnant people, and newborns in their communities;

Whereas midwifery is a significant source of maternal health services in rural, underserved, and low-resource urban areas, and CNMs and CMs attend over 30 percent of deliveries in rural hospitals;

Whereas CNMs and CMs provide care in every setting in which sexual and reproductive health care services are delivered, including hospitals, private office practices, public health departments, community health centers, the Armed Forces ,the Veterans Health Administration, the Indian Health Service , freestanding birth centers, and in the home setting;

Whereas 2020 has been designated by the World Health Organization as the International Year of the Nurse and the Midwife;

Whereas, in 1982, Congress passed a resolution designating April 19 through 26 as the first National Nurse-Midwifery Week, and the week continued to be observed in April until 1986 when the observance moved to November 2 through 8;

Whereas, since 1988, National Midwifery Week has been celebrated during the last week of September or the first week of October in order to raise public awareness of and celebrate the Nation's 13,000 certified nurse-midwives, certified midwives, and student midwives; and

Whereas the celebration of National Midwifery Week 2020 is October 4 through October 10: Now, therefore, be it

Resolved, That the House of Representatives—

- (1) acknowledges the celebration of National Midwifery Week;
- (2) recognizes the roles and the contributions of America's certified nurse-midwives and certified midwives in providing high-quality, evidence-based, cost-effective, and essential sexual and reproductive health care services to women and pregnant people;
- (3) thanks and promotes the profession of midwifery as practiced by certified nurse-midwives and certified midwives; and
- (4) encourages consumers, hospital administrators, health care professionals, policymakers, and others to become more familiar with the certified nurse-midwife and certified midwife credential and the exceptional people who have earned it and are currently studying to earn it by participating in National Midwifery Week.