MIDWIVES FOR MOMS ACT (S.1599/H.R.6394)

Midwives for Maximizing Optimal Maternity Services

The Midwives for MOMS Act is a bill to address the growing maternity care provider shortage, to improve outcomes for mothers and babies and reduce disparities, and to reduce costs for families and state/ federal governments, by expanding educational opportunities for midwives.

Originally introduced in the 116th Congress by Maternity Caucus founders, Congresswomen Lucille Roybal-Allard (D-CA) and Jaime Herrera Beutler (R-WA) , this legislation is currently led by Congresswoman Ashley Hinson (R-IA) in the House and by Senators Ben Ray Lujan (D-NM) and Lisa Murkowski (R-AK) in the Senate.

The bill would establish two new funding streams for midwifery education, one in the Title VII Health Professions Training Programs, and one in the Title VIII Nursing Workforce Development Programs. Additionally, the bill will address the growing shortage in the maternity care workforce by prioritizing students from rural and economically disadvantaged backgrounds.

The Midwives for MOMS Act is supported by over 45 national and state organizations including the March of Dimes, National Partnership for Women and Families, Every Mother Counts, American College of Nurse-Midwives (ACNM), National Association of Certified Professional Midwives (NACPM), American Association of Birth Centers (AABC), Birth Center Equity, Indigenous Birth, Policy Institute for Community Birth and Midwifery (PICBM), National Black Midwives Alliance, and the American Association of Colleges of Nursing (AACN).

Why the bill is needed

This country is facing a triple crisis of escalating costs, poor outcomes, and growing provider shortages in its maternity care system:

- The United States spends more than double per capita on childbirth than other industrialized countries. Maternity care is a major component of U.S. escalating health care costs, and Medicaid is the largest single payer of pregnancy-related services, financing approximately 45% of all US births. (National Partnership for Women and Families, 2024; KFF 2024; Forbes 2020)
- Despite the high costs of maternity care, childbirth continues to carry significant risks for mothers and babies in this country, and the United States' maternal mortality, severe maternal morbidity, preterm birth, infant mortality, and low birth weight all remain the highest among high-resource nations. (National Partnership for Women and Families 2020; CDC 2024)
- The United States is experiencing an increasingly severe shortage of trained maternity care providers, including OB-GYNs, family physicians providing full-scope or outpatient maternity services, and midwives. Over 35% of US counties are considered Maternity Care Deserts because they have no maternity care provider. (ACOG 2017; HRSA 2021; MOD 2024)

Midwives have been widely cited as a major solution to this threefold problem in US maternity care, but currently we are underutilizing midwives in our maternity care system compared to other developed nations.

- Decades of research has shown that women cared for by midwives have excellent birth outcomes, including lower episiotomy, cesarean birth, and preterm birth rates. Additionally, a 2018 mapping study found that states with a higher density of midwives, and a higher proportion of midwife-attended births, had higher rates of optimal birth outcomes such as vaginal births and breastfeeding rates; and lower rates of cesarean deliveries, preterm births, and neonatal deaths. (Birthplace Lab 2018; MOD 2024, Journal of Midwifery and Women's Health 2020)
- Studies have repeatedly shown that midwifery-led care resulted in significant cost savings to private insurance and state Medicaid programs. (University of Minnesota 2019; University of Massachusetts 2019; CMS Strong Start Study 2018)
- Despite these compelling statistics, midwives currently attend less than 12 percent of all births in the United States, compared to countries like Great Britain where midwives deliver half of all babies, and Sweden, Norway, and France where midwives oversee the majority of expectant and new mothers. All these countries have much lower rates of maternal and infant mortality than we do in the US. (ACNM; ProPublica, 2018; GAO, 2023)
- 70 percent of US counties do not have a single nurse midwife or certified midwife. (AMCB, 2023)

Summary of the Legislation

The Midwives for MOMS Act will increase the numbers of midwives educated in the US and will support the education of a more culturally diverse maternity care workforce.

- In Title VIII of the Public Health Service Act, the bill will authorize $20 million in grants administered by HRSA to schools of nursing for:
    - Direct support of student nurse-midwives;
    - Establishment or expansion of accredited nurse-midwifery schools or programs within a school of nursing; and
    - Securing, preparing, or providing support for increasing the number of nurse-midwifery student preceptors at clinical training sites
- In Title VII of the Public Health Service Act, the bill will authorize $15 million in grants administered by HRSA to accredited midwifery education programs located outside schools of nursing for:
    - Direct support of student midwives;
    - Establishment or expansion of accredited midwifery schools or programs; and
    - Securing, preparing, or providing support for increasing the number of midwifery student preceptors at clinical training sites

The bill will address the significant lack of diversity in the maternity care workforce by:

- Prioritizing midwifery programs that seek to recruit students from rural and economically disadvantaged areas, and institutions interested in establishing a midwifery education program;
- Targeting students who commit to serving in maternity care target shortage areas as identified by the Health Resources and Services Administration.

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