MIDWIVES FOR SERVICE MEMBERS ACT

The purpose of the **Midwives for Service Members Act** is to direct the Secretary of Defense to carry out a pilot program to provide services from all credentialed midwives to covered beneficiaries under the TRICARE program.

Originally introduced in the 118th Congress (H.R.9335) by Representative Derek Kilmer (D-WA), this bill would increase access to maternity care for service members and their spouses by extending TRICARE coverage to additional midwives through a 5-year pilot program. Adding Certified Professional Midwives and Certified Midwives as authorized providers in TRICARE will increase access to birth centers and midwifery care. The bill was reintroduced in the 119th Congress by Representatives Marilyn Strickland (D-WA), Juan Ciscomani (R-AZ), Emily Randall (D-WA), and Jen Kiggans (R-VA).

The bill language was included as an amendment in the 2025 House-passed NDAA bill but was not included in the final 2025 NDAA Conference Agreement.

Why is this legislation needed?

A growing number of hospitals on military bases no longer provide maternity care to their active-duty members and their spouses. When this care is needed, military beneficiaries must seek prenatal, birth, and postpartum care independently from an authorized provider. For some this means driving long distances.

Birth centers are one solution to this lack of access but are currently underutilized. Birth centers have been shown to provide high-quality, midwifery-led care, but only one midwifery credential, the Certified Nurse-Midwife (CNM), is covered by TRICARE. Other licensed midwives, including Certified Professional Midwives (CPMs) and Certified Midwives (CMs), are not authorized as providers.

Over half of all US birth centers are staffed by CPMs, who are currently excluded from being covered as credentialed providers in TRICARE. This means when these families choose birth center services, military families must pay out of pocket. When CPMs and CMs are added as covered providers, that will **double** the access to birth centers and birth center care.

Birth center outcomes are excellent

- The federally funded Strong Start for Mothers and Newborns Initiative found that preterm birth, low birthweight births, and NICU admissions were significantly reduced among participants in birth center care. The cesarean birth rate was also significantly reduced. These Strong Start birth centers were staffed by Certified Nurse-Midwives (CNMs), Certified Midwives (CMs), and Certified Professional Midwives (CPMs).

- Reductions in newborn complications, NICU admissions, and significantly reduced cesarean rates lead to cost savings compared to typical care. Strong Start demonstrated savings of over $2000 during the first year of life for every mother-baby pair who participated in birth center care compared to those with similar risk levels in usual maternity care.

The current state of maternity care for service members and their spouses creates barriers to access and can impact maternal and infant health. This is not in keeping with our nation's commitment to providing the best care for our military families. For this reason, we urge you to co-sponsor the MIDWIVES for Service Members Act to increase access to care and improve childbirth outcomes.

For more information, or to cosponsor the bill, please contact:

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