

**Rhode Island General Assembly**

**To:** House Finance Committee

**From:** Foluke Akinkunmi

**Date** May 5, 2026

**Re:** Support, House Bill 8174 Requiring Medicaid Coverage of Certified Professional Midwives

Mr. Chairman and members of the Committee, thank you for the opportunity to submit my testimony today. My name is Foluke Akinkunmi and I'm writing in strong support of 8174 Bill. Thank you to House Representatives Stewart, Tanzi, Voas, Giraldo, Furtado, Alzate, Cruz, Casimiro, Edwards, and Diaz for co-sponsoring.

As a Certified Professional Community Doula and public health researcher, I have seen firsthand the profound impact midwifery care has on birth outcomes. I have worked with mothers, especially women of color, who are fearful of giving birth because of poor maternal health outcomes and who wish midwifery care were a real, accessible option. Birthing people are dying unnecessarily, and expanding access to midwifery is a critical step toward addressing this crisis.

The midwifery model of care centers the birthing person and has been shown to reduce birth injury, trauma, and unnecessary cesarean sections. It is not enough for midwifery to be technically legal if it remains financially inaccessible to those who need it most. These financial constraints limit both birthing people's choices and the ability of midwives to sustainably serve their communities due to delayed or unreliable reimbursement.

This state has already seen the benefits of investing in community-based care through doula reimbursement. Supporting Medicaid coverage of Certified Professional Midwives will ensure that this state is making productive steps regarding the current state of maternal and well-woman care. Ensuring that birthworkers are paid allows families autonomy during one of the most vulnerable moments of their lives and helps address overburdened hospitals and maternal care deserts.

I urge you to strongly support the passage of House Bill 8174 to ensure that all families in Rhode Island have access to insurance coverage of CPMs, ensuring that birth workers can properly support their communities here in Rhode Island and that we combat the evolving maternal mortality crisis in this country.

Thank you for this opportunity to testify.