

Dear Chair Abney and Members of the House Finance Committee,

I respectfully urge your support for H8490, the “Noreen Drexel Birthing Center Fund Act.” This legislation provides an important and balanced strategy to preserve essential maternal and infant healthcare services for families in Newport County.

The Newport Hospital birthing center is a critical community healthcare resource that allows women and families to access safe, high-quality maternity care close to home. H8490 creates a collaborative funding model between the State of Rhode Island, Brown Health, and the philanthropic community to stabilize and strengthen these services while ensuring accountability, transparency, and long-term planning.

This bill recognizes that access to local birthing services is not only a healthcare issue, but also a matter of public health, family well-being, and regional equity. I encourage the committee to support H8490 and help secure the long-term sustainability of the Newport Hospital birthing center.

On a personal note, I would not have been able to make it to a different hospital in time to safely deliver my second child. Her life and my life would’ve been at risk.

Thank you for your consideration.

Margaret Perkins