



To: House Health and Human Services Committee

From: Rhode Island Birth Worker Cooperative, Inc.

Date: March 13, 2025

Re: House Bill 5858 - Prescriptive Authority for Certified Professional Midwives

The Rhode Island Birth Worker Cooperative is a member-owned cooperative of community doulas, certified lactation counselors, community health workers and more. RIBWC is headquartered in East Providence, Rhode Island and represents over 60 local community doulas and LLCs. We are one of the organizations represented in the Coalition to Improve RI Maternal Care advocating to pass House Bill 5858. The coalition is dedicated to promoting better maternal health care, including allowing Certified Professional Midwives to prescribe medications consistent with the scope of their practice.

Certified Professional Midwives (CPMs) and Licensed Midwives (LMs) are trained and licensed individuals who can independently manage prenatal, pregnancy, and postpartum care, normal newborn care, and well-woman/ well-body care, including the management of common health problems. They can provide routine physical screenings like pap smears and annual bloodwork to people who are not pregnant, as well. They practice primarily in an out-of-hospital setting (birth centers or homes) and focus on low-risk, physiologically normal birth.

Thirty-seven states and the District of Columbia have a path to licensure for CPMs. Licensed Midwife (LM) is a state certification, while Certified Professional Midwife (CPM) is a national certification. Providing culturally congruent, dignified, and respectful care within the scope of practice for Certified Professional Midwives is central to the Rhode Island Maternal Health Task Force's Strategic Plan. This care, delivered safely in patients' homes and supported by Rhode Island's growing workforce of CPMs, can play a crucial role in improving maternity care throughout the state.

This bill establishes the scope of CPMs' practice and authority relating to prescribing medication for their patients and will allow the potential of this growing workforce to be fully realized. This will enable CPMs to independently care for their patients in alignment with their training and knowledge, offering person-centered appropriate care.

RIBWC is a member-owned corporation of doulas who accept insurance in Rhode Island. Our mission is to provide a collaborative shared service for a birth worker network supporting families in RI. We represent over 60 certified community doulas who either accept Medicaid and commercial insurance or are on the pathway to do so. Doulas support families in understanding

their options and choices. Many of the families we take care of would like to birth at home under the care of a licensed midwife. Rhode Island licenses home birth midwives, however most families are unable to access that care. Along with the complimentary reimbursement legislation, we support this bill so that midwives can give the care they are trained to provide to our shared families.

People are currently paying out of pocket for home birth midwifery care, which is a tremendous barrier. If they can invest in a home birth midwife, they often have to establish care elsewhere for basic medicines and referrals that their CPM is prevented from offering. Wait times can be months long, which is not acceptable for our expecting families. Rhode Island has licensed home birth midwives for over a decade. It is time to complete the work of fully offering home birth midwifery care so that our families are receiving the highest quality, safest care, available to them.

Rhode Island Birth Worker Co-op strongly supports House Bill 5858 and urges passage. With your leadership, we can improve health equity and improve the maternal health landscape in Rhode Island. Thank you for the opportunity to provide this testimony.

Sincerely,

RIBWC Board of Directors

Claire Estacuy, BA, BS, CPD
Elyse Weeks, BS, D.AY, CPD
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Rosa Sierra, BA, CPD, CHW
Susie Finnerty, BFA, CPD, CLC, MCHS