

Thank you for the opportunity to submit my testimony today. Thank you to Representatives Stewart, Donovan, Boylan, Cotter, Caldwell, Fogarty, Cruz, Giraldo, Place, and Kislak for sponsoring this bill.

My name is Susie Finnerty, I am an East Providence resident, mother of 4, community doula, lactation counselor and maternal child health specialist. I serve on the state's Breastfeeding Task Force and Maternal Health Task Force, owner and founder of our state's Perinatal Resource Directory at RhodeIslandBirth.com, in leadership at the RI Birth Worker Cooperative, one of the co-authors of the Perinatal Doula Act and a long time advocate for families. I'm writing in support of House Bill 7275.

There are a lot of reasons to support this bill, and home birth. Many people also don't understand or want to birth at home, which is okay. In Rhode Island, home birth midwives are licensed to provide this care. I have been fortunate enough to be able to pay for a home birth midwife for only one of my four pregnancies. But more importantly, I support many families who are good candidates for, wanting to birth at home and do not because they don't have the resources to pay for this care that is not covered in any way by insurance. Why does this matter? A few weeks ago I was at the hospital with a family waiting for a room on labor and delivery. Not far away, another family birthed IN THE LOBBY who was also waiting. This is a regular part of my days and nights. People wait for hours, are not receiving much, if any, medical care while in triage waiting. There are many other things needed to remedy this experience, but one thing that shouldn't wait any longer is the state taking this step to make home birth care actually available. It doesn't make any sense how many people want this and are birthing in hospitals that don't have enough rooms or nurses to care for them. This is cost saving for the state, hospitals and insurance companies. It is safe, it is licensed. This next step is so needed.

I have been in Rhode Island for 14 years, this is my home. I am from Washington and Oregon, where CPMs (who have the same level of skills and training) don't have these issues. It is time for Rhode Island to pass this important legislation so that we can as a state offer a high quality licensure for professionals and families who seek out that care. I urge you to pass House Bill 7275 to ensure that licensed certified professional midwives can take care of more than the select few that have enough cash for their fee.

Sincerely,
Susie Finnerty