



April 9, 2026

**Subject: SEIU 1199NE Testimony in Support of H-7272, H-7626, and H-8203 – Protecting Access to the Newport Birthing Center**

Dear Chairwoman Donovan and Honorable Members of the House Health & Human Services Committee:

On behalf of SEIU 1199NE, representing approximately 7,500 healthcare workers across Rhode Island — including approximately 2,200 workers at Women & Infants Hospital — we write in strong support of H-7272, H-7626, and H-8203.

These bills protect access to maternal healthcare by ensuring that birthing centers cannot be closed or reduced without transparency, oversight, and accountability.

Women & Infants Hospital delivers between 8,500 and 9,000 babies each year and serves as the state's primary high-risk referral center. It already operates under significant strain, with staffing levels that often do not reflect how complex and intensive patient care has become.

Frontline caregivers are routinely responsible for more patients than is safe. High-risk situations require constant monitoring, coordination, and time — but staffing levels do not adjust to reflect that reality. When units are short-staffed, care is delayed, and critical aspects of care are compromised.

Nurses have described situations where multiple high-acuity patients require attention at the same time, yet staffing remains unchanged. Education — a core part of postpartum care — is often the first thing lost. Families leave the hospital without the support they need, whether it is guidance on breastfeeding, recovery, or recognizing complications.

At the same time, experienced staff are leaving, and newer staff are being asked to manage increasingly complex situations without adequate support. The system is stretched thin.

If access points like the Newport Hospital Birthing Center are reduced or eliminated, these pressures will intensify. Patients will be redirected to Women & Infants, increasing volume, acuity, and strain on a system that is already struggling to keep up.

These bills ensure that decisions about reducing or eliminating maternal health services are not made without transparency or accountability. They recognize that access to care and the capacity to safely provide that care are directly connected.

Rhode Island cannot afford fewer access points for maternal care. The state should be strengthening and stabilizing these services, not allowing them to erode.

We urge you to support H-7272, H-7626, and H-8203.

Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Alex Moore". The signature is written in a cursive style with a long, sweeping tail on the "e".

Alex Moore

Political Director

SEIU 1199NE

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