

Steven Sepe

From: Emily Walsh <emilywalsh@usf.edu>
Sent: Thursday, April 9, 2026 9:08 PM
To: House Health and Human Services Committee
Subject: Support for Continued Maternity Care Access in Newport County

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Dear Members of the House Health and Human Services Committee,

I am writing as a Newport native who grew up on Aquidneck Island and who now studies public health and anthropology with a focus on maternal and child health. While I am currently pursuing my undergraduate and graduate education in Florida, my roots—and my future—are firmly tied to Newport County.

It is both heartbreaking and deeply frustrating to see my home community face this battle as there's been the possibility of losing the only maternity care center on the island. Access to local, high-quality maternity care is not just a convenience—it is a necessity. Families should not have to face the uncertainty and risk of traveling long distances during labor or in an emergency. Time, safety, and continuity of care all matter, and they directly impact outcomes for both birthing individuals and infants.

From both a personal and academic perspective, the importance of maintaining local maternity services is clear. Research and lived experiences alike show that access to nearby care improves health outcomes, reduces stress on families, and strengthens community well-being. The birthing center is not just a healthcare facility—it is a critical piece of infrastructure that supports the health and stability of the entire island.

Looking ahead, I cannot imagine returning home to raise a family without access to maternity care on the island. My generation is thinking about where and how we will build our lives, and decisions like this directly influence whether young people can realistically come back, stay, and invest in their communities.

I urge you to consider not only the immediate impact of this decision, but the long-term consequences for Newport County's future. Preserving access to maternity care is an investment in the health, safety, and sustainability of the community for generations to come.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

Emily Walsh (*she/her*) [\(what's this?\)](#)

President of the Maternal and Child Health Student Organization (MCHSO)

MPH Student in Maternal & Child Health

MA Student in Applied Anthropology

University of South Florida, Tampa

[LinkedIn](#)

