

Steven Sepe

From: Katie Hellendrung <katiehellendrung@hotmail.com>
Sent: Wednesday, April 8, 2026 2:31 PM
To: House Health and Human Services Committee
Cc: Rebecca Clark
Subject: Legislation for the Newport Hospital Birthing Center

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Katie Hellendrung
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April 8, 2026

Re: Legislation for the Newport Hospital Birthing Center

To the legislators of Rhode Island, the members of our Aquidneck Island community, the dedicated healthcare providers who stand behind this cause, and to Brown University Health—thank you for hearing our voices and recognizing the importance of the Newport Hospital Birthing Center.

My name is Katie Hellendrung, and I live in Middletown, Rhode Island. I share my story as someone whose life has been profoundly shaped by the care provided at the Birthing Center. My husband Mark and I had the privilege of welcoming five daughters there, but our story begins with loss. I am the mother of four living daughters and also of a daughter who never took her first breath. On April 21, 2001, I gave birth to my first child, Anna. She was 6 pounds, 12 ounces, and perfect—and she was stillborn. There was no newborn cry when she entered the world—only silence.

What followed was unimaginable. But what I will never forget is the care we received. The nurses, midwives, and doctors at the Birthing Center did more than provide medical care—they provided humanity. They held space for my grief. They remembered my daughter's name. They helped me begin to heal. When I became pregnant again, they were there every step of the way—supporting my fears, honoring my hope, and ultimately celebrating my joy. I was never just a patient. I was Katie. I was Anna's mom.

That continuity of care is what makes this Birthing Center irreplaceable. This is not just about one facility—it is about access to safe, local, high-quality maternity care. Families in Newport County should not have to travel far from home during some of the most critical moments of their lives. That is why the legislative bills before you are so important. H8203 ensures that if public funds support hospital infrastructure, essential services like the Birthing Center must be maintained. H7272 requires transparency, state review, and meaningful public input before maternity services can be reduced or eliminated. H7322 advances a statewide commitment to improving maternal health outcomes and equity.

You have already shown that you understand what is at stake. You have looked beyond the balance sheet and recognized that these decisions are not just financial—they are human. Now we must go further. We need a plan. We need long-term sustainability. We need permanence. I urge you to support these measures and

ensure that the Birthing Center remains part of Newport Hospital. Because one decision made here will shape families for generations.

Thank you for your time, your consideration, and your commitment to our community.

Sincerely,

Katie Hellendrung