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To: House Health and Human Services Committee
Subject: Birthing Center Testimonial

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Good afternoon,

As a former birthing center nurse and mother of three children delivered at Newport Hospital I would like to share my unique perspective on the unit and the challenges it faces.

As an employee, I had the privilege of working under extraordinary leadership that held staff to a standard of excellence that I have not witnessed in any other health care setting. More remarkably, though, I worked among nurses and doctors who not only willingly met those standards but enthusiastically dedicated themselves to professional development in obstetric and maternal care. The culture of this unit stands far from the norm, with quality and caring at the heart of its operation. No empty words or slogans, just patient centered care delivered genuinely and seamlessly in their daily practice.

As a parent, I was lovingly supported on three separate occasions for the birth of my children, the final time this past winter. We chose to travel to Newport Hospital despite it being a longer distance from our new home, knowing that their comfort and skill could not be matched. These incredible caregivers provided an experience each time that felt informed, intentional and empowered even in my most vulnerable moments. Their skill and confidence put me at ease and their warmth made me feel as though I was among family. I could never adequately thank them for the work they do, the ongoing resources they provide, the breast-feeding support group that shaped my experience of motherhood- but that is what they deserve, to be thanked, recognized and above all preserved.

I urge the leaders faced with the decisions ahead to see this as an opportunity to innovate and find a solution that could retain this essential community resource while also meeting the institution's financial goals. Though it is a small unit within a small hospital it serves an important population, and its value is inherent. The families directly impacted by the unit and the community at large have passionately demonstrated the need for this unit to remain, so I ask that you find a way to build upon it, expand its potential and discover alternative sources of revenue rather than eliminating a beloved and necessary resource.

With gratitude for your time,

Samantha Leary