

## Steven Sepe

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**From:** Lauren Swensen <laurentswensen@gmail.com>  
**Sent:** Wednesday, April 8, 2026 5:48 PM  
**To:** House Health and Human Services Committee  
**Subject:** Birthing Center at Newport Hospital

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Dear Rhode Island State Reps and Committee Members,

I am writing to urge you to keep the birthing center at Newport Hospital open and to fully explore every possible option to sustain and strengthen this essential service for our community.

I just gave birth to my second child at Newport Hospital on Easter Sunday (April 5, 2026). My labor progressed so quickly that I gave birth 45 minutes after getting to L&D. Would I have had to travel even further to Providence, I may not have made it to a hospital in time. Aside from the proximity of the birthing center at Newport, the nurses were incredible in the chaos of such a fast birth. Within minutes, the full set up of equipment and care team personnel were making sure my baby and I would have a safe delivery. This is the care that Newport County residents need and deserve. While elated to hear the news of it staying open, we need state legislature support to ensure this is not a yearly battle that residents, particularly local moms, need to tackle.

For families across Newport County, access to safe, local, high-quality maternal care is not a luxury; it is a necessity. Requiring expectant mothers to travel further for labor and delivery, especially given the state of RI's infrastructure and transit issues, introduces unnecessary risks, delays in care, and added emotional and financial stress during one of life's most critical moments.

It is especially important to acknowledge that the burden of this closure will not be felt equally. Families already facing barriers to care—including those with limited income, unreliable transportation, inflexible work schedules, language barriers, or limited access to childcare—will be disproportionately impacted. For some, traveling to Providence or across state lines is not simply inconvenient; it may be logistically unmanageable or medically unsafe. This reality risks deepening existing inequities in maternal and infant health outcomes, particularly for vulnerable populations who already experience higher rates of complications and poorer access to consistent prenatal and postpartum care.

The birthing center is more than a hospital unit; it is a cornerstone of community health, safety, and dignity. Its closure would leave a significant gap in care that cannot be easily replaced.

I respectfully ask that you:

- Commit to maintaining birthing services at Newport Hospital
- Provide a clear, transparent plan outlining the program's future
- Engage with the community and healthcare providers to identify solutions
- Explore all viable pathways to sustaining a high-quality, "5-star" birthing center that serves families for generations to come

This moment calls for thoughtful leadership and a commitment to the wellbeing of the families you serve. I urge you to prioritize access, safety, and long-term investment in maternal care on in Newport County.

Thank you for your time, your leadership, and your consideration of this urgent matter.  
Sincerely,

Lauren Swensen  
Newport County Resident