

Dear Chair and Members of the Committee,

My name is Tyler Grimes. I am a mother, a Newport local, and a doula. I work directly with pregnant women, new parents, and newborns across Rhode Island.

I am writing to urge your support for the three bills H8203, H7272, and H7322 that protect and sustain the Newport Birthing Center. I also want to acknowledge the recent news that the Newport Birthing Center will remain open, but I write today with gratitude and urgency.

Because keeping the doors open is not the finish line, it's the starting point.

As a practitioner and small business owner in maternal and infant care, I want to be clear: Supporting these bills is essential but it is only one piece of what is needed for long term sustainability and accountability.

Right now, what we're hearing is:
short-term solutions, uncertain funding, and undefined next steps.

Rhode Island families deserve more than uncertainty because we are in the middle of a maternal health crisis. Black women are still 2-3x more likely to die from pregnancy related causes than white women. And here in Rhode Island, disparities are present.

We know what improves outcomes: continuity of care, community based support, and access to low intervention settings.

That is exactly what this birthing center provides.

As a small business owner, I understand margins. Brown has the opportunity to optimize margins and lower overall costs in multiple areas of their maternity center. I say this because I have done my own research by studying small birthing units around the country, Cleveland Clinic, for example, and what they have done to not only sustain their maternity unit, but grow revenue like never before. These hospital systems and representatives chose to nurture it, invest in it, and not give up on mothers and their babies.

Better care and lower costs can exist at the same time.

So the question is:

Why would Brown not adjust to a model that continues supporting our community while also generating sustainable revenue?

Because when community-based care disappears, the impact is not equal. It is Black and Brown families who lose access first, and that is how disparities widen.

If Brown is serious about:
health equity
innovation
and community responsibility

Then this is the moment to prove it.

Not by pointing to recent losses.
Not by shifting resources away from preventative care.
But through action.

What I am asking today is to hold Brown University Health accountable, not just to keep the birthing center open, but to strengthen it. Invest in it. I encourage the legislature to consider how it might **require** or **strongly** encourage Brown to evaluate and act on these items:

1. Establishing a Community Council for the Birthing Center
2. Developing a Regional Maternity Staffing Plan
3. Strengthening Marketing and Visibility
4. Planning for a Family Medicine Residency Program

Because when we think about the future of humanity, even in our little state of Rhode Island, two populations matter most: Children, and the women from which they come.

I urge you again to support these three bills and **require** brown to ensure this center is not only preserved, but positioned to thrive.

Thank you.

Tyler Grimes