

Steven Sepe

From: Latisha Michel <latishamichel@readysetchgo.com>
Sent: Thursday, April 9, 2026 1:34 PM
To: House Health and Human Services Committee
Subject: Support of H8203, H7272, and H7626

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Dear Chair and Members of the House Health Committee,

My name is Latisha Michel, and I'm a Rhode Island Certified Perinatal Doula and Community Health Worker. I've spent years supporting families through pregnancy, birth, and postpartum walking alongside them in real time, not just in theory. So when I speak about access to maternity care, I'm speaking from what I see and experience every day in our communities.

I'm writing because this is personal. Newport Hospital needs to continue offering essential healthcare services to the families and communities on Aquidneck Island especially when it comes to maternity care.

I strongly support H8203, H7272, and H7626 because access to local birthing services is not a luxury it's a necessity. It's a public health issue. When these services are reduced or taken away without transparency or real community input, it's the families especially the most vulnerable who are left to deal with the consequences.

As a doula and community health worker, I see firsthand what happens when access is limited. Transportation becomes a barrier. Families delay care. Stress increases. Outcomes are impacted. These are not hypotheticals this is what our community will face if we lose local birthing services.

H8203 is about accountability. If Brown Health is receiving taxpayer dollars from the state of Rhode Island to support essential healthcare services, then they should be required to keep the Newport Hospital Birthing Center open. Public money should come with a responsibility to the public.

H7272 is about making sure decisions aren't made behind closed doors. It requires clear financial justification, public notice, and approval from the Department of Health before a birthing center can be closed or reduced. That matters, because our communities deserve to be informed, involved, and considered in decisions that directly impact their care.

This isn't about stopping healthcare systems from managing themselves it's about making sure they are accountable when it comes to essential services like maternal and newborn care.

H7626 is about the long game. We need to make sure maternal health, workforce development, and equity are not treated like temporary initiatives, but built into long-term policy. Our outcomes won't improve without sustained commitment.

Every birth I attend is an opportunity to protect dignity, safety, and care. Keeping the Newport Hospital Birthing Center open is part of that work on a larger scale.

Maternal health is a reflection of how well our healthcare system is working overall. If we get this right, we support not just mothers and babies, but entire families and communities.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Latisha Michel (she/her)

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"Birth isn't something we suffer, but something we actively do and exult in"