



Dear Chair and Members of the House Health Committee:

My name is Lindsay Cutler, and I serve as the Executive Director of the Newport Partnership for Families. I am writing to express strong support for H8203, H7272, and H7626, and to urge your consideration of the critical role these bills play in protecting maternal and newborn health in our community.

The membership of Newport Partnership for Families consists of service providers, community organizations, and families across Newport County. We have consistently heard from our members about the importance of accessible, local maternal health care. While we appreciate that Brown University Health has announced the birthing center will remain open, this moment has made clear how fragile access can be, and why long-term assurance is essential. For families without reliable transportation, distance is not an inconvenience; it is a barrier to care. Labor is unpredictable and can progress quickly; public transportation is often simply not an option. When a birthing center is not nearby, families are forced to depend on rides they may not have, expensive rideshares, or ambulances that may or may not be fully covered by insurance. No one should have to weigh cost, distance, and access in the moments leading up to childbirth. Beyond the potential challenges and cost of accessing transportation to begin with, long travel times pose a greater risk to the health of a mother and child and make it more difficult to rely on support from family members. All of these factors disproportionately impact low-income families and communities of color.

A local birthing center is also important to the long-term health of a community. It signals to families that they are supported and valued, and without a local birthing center, families planning to expand may be discouraged from staying in or moving to the area.

We urge you to support H8203, H7272, and H7626 to protect access, strengthen accountability, and invest in the long-term health of Rhode Island's families.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,
Lindsay Cutler
Executive Director
Newport Partnership for Families