

## Steven Sepe

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**From:** Melissa Bowley <melissa@flourishcommunitycare.com>  
**Sent:** Monday, April 6, 2026 12:29 PM  
**To:** House Health and Human Services Committee  
**Subject:** Testimony in Support of Protecting Access to Local Maternity Care in Newport County

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Dear Chair and Members of the House Health Committee:

My name is Melissa Bowley. I am a Newport resident, the founder of Flourish Care, and a mother who delivered both of my children at the Newport Hospital Birthing Center, across the street from where I live.

Because that care was local, accessible, and supportive, I experienced low-intervention births and avoided complications. That is not just my personal experience—it reflects the kind of outcomes this model of care is designed to support.

Through my work and within this community, I see how essential it is for families to have access to safe, local maternity care.

Labor is time-sensitive and unpredictable. Forcing families to travel off-island—across bridges and longer distances—introduces real and preventable risks. These risks fall hardest on Medicaid patients, families with limited transportation, and those already facing barriers to care.

There are proven models—such as midwifery-led and community-based approaches—that provide safe, lower-cost care while maintaining strong outcomes.

As a nonprofit, tax-exempt health system that benefits from public funding and community support, there is a responsibility to prioritize community health needs—not just higher-margin services.

I urge you to support legislation like H8203, H7272, and H7626 to ensure that decisions about essential healthcare services are transparent, accountable, and grounded in the needs of the communities they serve.

Most importantly, I urge you to protect access to local maternity care for Newport families.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,  
Melissa Bowley