

09 APR 2026

Dear Chair and Members of the House Health Committee:

Newport Hospital must offer essential health care services to our communities and families on Aquidneck Island. Brown Health must keep the Birthing Center at Newport Hospital open.

I write in strong support of H8203, H7272 and H7626. Access to local maternity care is a fundamental component of public health infrastructure. When birthing services are reduced or eliminated without meaningful transparency and review, families and communities bear the consequences.

H8203 ties strings to any money that Brown Health receives from the taxpayer money from the State of Rhode Island. If Brown Health receives any money from the state of Rhode Island to ensure essential health care services for Rhode Islanders, it must keep the Newport Hospital Birthing Center open.

H7272 strengthens oversight by requiring clear financial justification, public notice, and Department of Health approval before a birthing center can be closed or materially reduced. These safeguards ensure that decisions impacting maternal and newborn care are made transparently and with full consideration of community need. This bill does not prevent responsible health system management — it ensures accountability when essential services are at stake.

H7626 ensures that maternal health data, workforce development, and equity initiatives are integrated into long-term state policy rather than temporary initiatives. Maternal health outcomes reflect the strength of our healthcare system as a whole. This bill provides the stability and accountability necessary to improve outcomes for mothers and infants statewide.

I respectfully urge passage.

I have worked in Labor & Delivery in the past, and I delivered all three of my children at the Noreen Stonor Drexel Birthing Center at Newport Hospital. They were all born quite precipitously; therefore, we were very fortunate for the close location to our home and for the incredible expertise at TBC.

Thank you in advance for your thoughtful consideration and awareness of the impact and outcome these critical decisions will have on thousands of lives.

Sincerely,
Meg Edward RN
Newport, RI