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From: Pascale Bronder Aslaner <pascalebronder@gmail.com>
Sent: Thursday, April 9, 2026 11:29 AM
To: House Health and Human Services Committee
Subject: Testimony for H8203, H7272, and H7627

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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.

I write in strong support of H8203, H7272, and H7627.

My husband is active duty in the Navy, and we have loved calling Newport our home. The troubling turmoil of the birthing center is, however, affecting our family planning. The snow storms and historic blizzard this winter raise serious concerns over bridge closings and safe access to healthcare in one of the most medically challenging times in a person's life: labor and delivery.

After reading the letter from Newport Fire Chief Harp Donnelly, the strain on resources and time of emergency services in the event the birthing center were to close comes sharply into view. It is catastrophic to read as a woman trying to plan for her next child. Second children come quick, third even faster. The time is worrisome to get from Newport across a bridge with eight fire people in escort to a hospital to safely deliver. So many questions come to mind. What if other emergencies are happening on the island? Will I be told there isn't enough staff to help me get to a hospital if I require an ambulance? Will I be told I have to try to give birth at home because of the resource constraints? What if I need a caesarian section or my baby needs immediate medical attention to survive? Birth never goes the way you imagine, but Aquidneck Island residents should not be immediately at higher risk to deliver in the back of their car because of government's failure to protect their access to a local, safe, well equipped, and open birthing center.

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 needs.

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.

Sincerely,

Pascale Bronder Aslaner

Spouse / US Navy / City of Newport