

April 08, 2026

Dear Chair and Members of the House Health Committee:

I urge my state representatives to support legislation H8203, H7272 and H7626 sponsored by Lauren Carson that will strengthen and safeguard maternal healthcare and keep the Noreen Stonor Drexel Birthing center open at Newport hospital.

I was born at Newport Hospital over 65 years ago, along with my siblings and throughout the years, Newport hospital and its medical staff have worked diligently to be recognized as a Magnet Designated hospital and bestowed numerous awards in providing superior nursing/healthcare to the Aquidneck Island community. These awards range from child birth education, nutrition, and breastfeeding which are essential public health components that support Aquidneck Island women.

The birth of a baby should be a welcoming experience and parents should not be faced with additional stress of being forced to travel over (2) bridges with traffic issues or severe weather conditions to Providence due to the birth center closure. A worst-case scenario would be if mother/baby experience an unexpected medical complication and could not deliver in time, resulting in a traumatic outcome.

As a native Newporter, I fondly remember the lifetime of dedicated service that Mrs. Drexel gave to our city in healthcare and education. Although, Mrs. Drexel was born in aristocracy (a descendant of Nicholas Brown, founder of Brown university,) she was an advocate for many humanitarian charities from United Nations, American Red Cross to founding the Childbirth Education Association. It is only befitting to maintain her charitable legacy by keeping the Noreen Stoner Drexel Birthing Center open and state/donor funding to continue.

In closing, I request that House Bills H8203, H2727 and H7626 be passed to ensure continued quality maternal health care for our pregnant Aquidneck Island women.

Respectively

Ruth A. Wernquest

1st Ward District Newport