

**Written Testimony for Public Hearing
Appropriations Committee
March 3, 2021**

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Bill Number: HB 6439 AN ACT CONCERNING THE STATE BUDGET FOR THE BIENNIUM ENDING JUNE THIRTIETH, 2023, AND MAKING APPROPRIATIONS THEREFOR

Dear Senator Osten, Representative Walker, Senator Hartley, Representative Dathan and estimated members of the Appropriations Committee, Thank you for the opportunity to offer testimony regarding the Governor's Proposed FY 2022-2023 Budget for Human Services. I strongly urge you to amend this budget to support pay parity for Certified Nurse Midwives as outlined in SB 764: AN ACT CONCERNING MEDICAID PROVIDERS

I have been a Nurse-Midwife for 30 years in Connecticut and know it is now a priority of the state to address inequities in the area of reproductive and women's health. In 2015, the Governor appointed the Connecticut Coalition to Improve Birth Outcomes which had as a goal to "Increase access to midwifery care for all women considered low-risk (medically)". Governor Lamont's own Women's Issue Policy Committee recognized pay parity as a way to increase access to midwifery care to address issues of health disparities. The Governor's announcement of Dr. Gifford as DSS Commissioner stated as an objective "to improve the delivery of these services utilizing innovative tools that increase the value and outcomes for consumers while also producing cost-saving efficiencies for the agency." This is exactly what Nurse-Midwives do--we improve outcomes and decrease costs.

The pandemic underscores the impact of health disparities and access. We have seen the burden on the public health system increase with many of our residents losing private insurance; licensed midwives can meet this challenge. As our state convenes a commission to address disparities in maternal health; as we investigate and address the social determinants of health and the racial and ethnic bias that impact communities of color; as we look at innovative models of health care that combine cost and excellence; we midwives are uniquely positioned to serve.

Studies show that women cared by licensed midwives have lower rates of cesarean deliveries, induction rates, anesthesia use and higher breastfeeding rates. In Connecticut, the cesarean rate is too high at 34.6% of all births. In 3 midwifery run practices in Connecticut who had over 1000 deliveries, the C/S rate was 11.4%. Increasing access to midwifery care means allowing midwifery practices to thrive, retaining our graduates by staying competitive in the midwifery market, and by making midwives an important option in all settings; currently many private practices either decline to take Medicaid or limit the number of women they will take due to decreased reimbursement. Midwives are also experts in life long women's health care, meeting the needs of adolescents and the elderly. Too many women, especially low-income women and women of color do not have access to necessary reproductive health care—including contraception, abortion, STI screenings, and reproductive cancer screenings. Parity in pay will improve access and thereby improve costs to the state with less interventions and by utilizing effective and life changing strategies that support women and their families.

In 2010, the Federal government rectified this inequality as Medicare rates for Midwives were federally mandated to be equal to physician rates. The federal government recognizes that we

midwives are part of an integrated model to increase access to appropriate and cost-saving services that improve health outcomes in maternal child health.

In Connecticut, we need to fully reimburse midwives at the physician rate for the same services rendered. Increased use of midwives and better access to midwifery care will help save lives and save the state money. We have watched while the states around us have achieved parity of Medicaid reimbursements between midwives and physicians; we have been disappointed that this inequity has not yet been addressed here in Connecticut. Equal pay for the same service is not a new concept. Making sure that CNM pay equity is reflected in the state budget would be a small increase causing an important and long overdue impact.

Less health disparities, better health outcomes, and less costly interventions in women's health saves women at the same time it saves Connecticut money. I urge your support amending the budget with **HB 6439 AN ACT CONCERNING THE STATE BUDGET FOR THE BIENNIUM ENDING JUNE THIRTIETH, 2023, AND MAKING APPROPRIATIONS THEREFOR** by supporting pay parity for Nurse-Midwives.