

July 9, 2022

Dear Speaker Mariano:

At a time when women's reproductive health options are being rolled back in many states across the country, we were pleased to see that Massachusetts was able to pass important legislation to preserve access to abortion services. We need to do the same for two important, well-vetted midwifery bills that should have advanced beyond the committee process for a floor vote in THIS legislative session, but unfortunately did not make it (here is the text of H4640 and H3881: <https://legiscan.com/MA/text/H4640/2021> and <https://legiscan.com/MA/bill/H3881/2021>). We hope that you will meet with a few of us soon, so we can describe in more detail why these bills are critically important for passage this year, especially for women of color in our state.

As you know, the MA Joint Committee on Healthcare Financing sent to study 9 of 12 bills related to maternal health and equity despite the strong support for these bills expressed by the MA Department of Public Health as well as the MA Legislature's Special Commission on Racial Inequities in Maternal Health (full text here: <https://malegislature.gov/Bills/192/SD3168/Bills>).

In an era of pandemics, when freestanding birth centers are needed more than ever for healthy people experiencing uncomplicated births, the only two such birth centers in Eastern MA now face possible permanent closure. (The only other such birth center is in Amherst, MA, and all three have been immensely popular in their communities.) On June 14, the Boston Globe covered the community protest about the announced closing of the North Shore Birth Center (<https://www.bostonglobe.com/2022/06/13/metro/cuts-maternal-health-services-ignite-protests/>), but a recent meeting with the Beverly Hospital president did not go well for families in that area. As we write, Cambridge area residents are also gearing up to ensure that the Cambridge Birth Center will re-open and not permanently shutter its doors, as some short-sighted members of the ob-gyn department at Cambridge Hospital might like.

At the same time, there are exciting plans to open the new Neighborhood Birth Center in Roxbury/Dorchester during 2023 (www.neighborhoodbirthcenter.org), and these two bills could help ensure its success. It would add an important option for those with healthy

pregnancies seeking to avoid hospital-based infection and other problems, like the well-documented mistreatment that many women of color now experience in hospital settings.

Decades of research and recommendations from national and global expert organizations and academics have pointed to fully-integrated midwifery as key to improving our birth outcomes. The most recent report documenting the advantages of having more out-of-hospital birth settings is from the National Partnership for Women and Families:

<https://www.nationalpartnership.org/our-work/health/maternity/community-birth-settings.html>. Please share this with your staff, if they have not already seen it.

H4640 and H3881 are excellent avenues for achieving better outcomes, and H4640 now meets all the ACOG requirements delineated over the past few years. Better integrating midwifery care would reduce unnecessary interventions, increase satisfaction for childbearing families, increase breastfeeding rates, and even reduce overall costs. Ironically, Massachusetts is behind our New England neighbors in achieving this integration, and we can rectify that now.

We appreciate how busy you are and still hope that you will find time for either an in-person meeting or a Zoom meeting with a few of us signing this letter, as we are deeply concerned about this matter. Thank you so much for considering this request.

Sincerely:

Jane Maffie-Lee, MSN, FNP-BC, Quincy
Steven M. Greenberg, Hull
Parlee Jones, Worcester
Athena Callender, Worcester
Ann Sweeney, Cambridge
Judith Norsigian, Newton
Sarah Schuyler, Worcester
Born Taylor, Worcester
Sha-Asia Taylor, Worcester
Tracy Jones, Worcester
Kay-Ann Gunning, Worcester
Roberta London, Duxbury
Danielle LaRiiere, Sturbridge
Milagros Mejias, Worcester.
Wanda Alvarado Eaton, Worcester
Deb Powers, Worcester
Kimberly Tornatola, Worcester
Gaylen Moore, Worcester

Katherine Calano, Worcester
Cailley Cooke, Worcester
Liz Leidel, Worcester
Cheryll Holley, Worcester
Amy Ebbson, Rutland
Joyce McNickles, Sutton
Gloria D. Hall, Worcester
Tanya Neslusan, Sturbridge
Jennifer Davis Carey, Worcester
Christopher M. O;Keeffe, Marlborough
Anna Bragdon Lawler, Worcester
Dawn Johnson, Worcester
Imrana Soofi, Worcester
Marianna Islam, Worcester
Miurka Torres, Millbury
Nicole Bell, Worcester
Angelina Sahin, Worcester
Honee Hess, Worcester

Karen King, Holden
Sumaiyyah Kharashqah
Sandra Alafberg, Worcester
Heather-Lyn Haley, Cherry Valley
Glen Harris, Cherry Valley
Alyssa Corazzini, Worcester
Jini Henderson, Holden
Sharlene Ryan, Auburn
Nahani Meuse, Worcester
Stacey Coles, Springfield, MA
Cindy Jackson, Worcester
Rebecca Schoville, Sterling
Dorothy Swope, Worcester
Susan Solis-Castaneda, Oxford
Patricia Korandanis, Holden
Olivia Cepeda, Worcester
Shamekia Pearson, Worcester
Cara Lisa Berg Powers, Worcester
Cherie Gonyou, Worcester
Elizabeth Hagan, Worcester
Demetra Kennedy, Worcester
Meghan Person, Worcester
Maurie Robinson Bergeron, Leominster
Aretha Kharashqah, Worcester
Abigail Hannaford-Ricardi, Worcester
Nicole Belanger, Worcester
Patricia Lamarche, Worcester
Gail Schuyler, Worcester
Michael Madden, Worcester
Jeannette Rivera, Chicopee
Linda Jackson, Millbury
Jessica Mangiameli, Worcester
Angela Sahin, Worcester
Latefa Price, Worcester
Judi Wilcox, Worcester
Maydee Morales, Worcester
Jennifer Safford, Worcester
Laila McCarthy, Shrewsbury
Luna Waters Hyde, Hyde Park
Virginia Festa, Worcester
Nicole Braithwaite-Hunt, Worcester
Melissa Hyland, Worcester
Amara I Thomas, Worcester
April Roach, Worcester
Andrea Davis-Tarantino, North Grafton
Benetta L Kuffour, Worcester
Elif Poole, Worcester

Sharon Dunn, Worcester
Rev. Meredyth Ward, Worcester
Tawana Wright, Worcester
Gabrielle Alan, Worcester
Nicole Smith, Worcester
Emmanuel Yirenkyi, Worcester
Athena Haddon, Worcester
Patricia Hudson, Worcester
Tina Sampson, Boston
Melissa Casey Starr, Worcester
Cecilia McKinnon, Boston
Gordon T. Davis, Worcester
Gwen Davis, Worcester
Shana Gourdine, Worcester
April R. Martin, Worcester
Sarah Bertrand, Worcester
Rafaela Morales-Rosa, Worcester
Kamilah Mitchell, Worcester
Rasheedah Hazard, Worcester
Kimberly Simmons, Worcester
Henry Tatum, Worcester
Alisha Pickett, Worcester
Nikki Erskine, Worcester
David Jerry, Worcester
Carmen S. Negrón, Worcester
Siku J. Hale, Worcester
Lucelia De Jesus, Worcester
Latanya Gordon, Worcester
Reanna Filmore, Worcester
Jerry Filmore, Worcester
Carol Hazzard, Worcester
Craig Schuyler, Worcester
Ginny Festa, Worcester
Keon Callender, Worcester
Kyle Nicholson, Worcester