

PushNews from The Big Push for Midwives Campaign

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Advocates Spotlight Absence of “Beginning-of-Life” Provisions in House Bill *Maternity Care Crisis Ignored as Controversy about End-of-Life Issues Continues*

Washington, DC (August 17, 2009)—As the controversy over the inclusion of end-of-life provisions in the House health care reform bill continues, questions emerged about the lack of “beginning-of-life” provisions in the bill that would expand access to maternity care providers and settings and ensure that patients receive adequate care across their life span.

“The U.S. has one of the worst infant and maternal mortality rates in the developed world,” said Elizabeth Allemann, MD. “The cesarean section rate has skyrocketed to more than a third of all births in the country, and with nearly half of all births being paid for by Medicaid, taxpayers are getting hit hard. We have a crisis on our hands and we need to start paying as much attention to beginning-of-life issues as we do to end-of-life-issues.”

Among the measures being promoted by advocates seeking to reform the maternity care system is the addition of a provision to the House bill that would provide access to out-of-hospital birth and the services of Certified Professional Midwives, who are specially trained to provide it, for women receiving Medicaid.

“We know that women cared for by Certified Professional Midwives experience significantly reduced rates of low birth weight and preterm births, two of the leading causes of cost increases and growing racial and ethnic disparities in birth outcomes,” said Jane Peterson, LM, CPM. “Moreover, Certified Professional Midwives are able to produce these outcomes at a fraction of the cost of traditional maternity care. The House bill represents a golden opportunity for us to embrace maternity care reforms that truly can make a positive impact on our health care system and on the lives of mothers and babies.”

David A. Anderson, Professor of Economics at Centre College, calculates that if the rate of births that take place in private homes and in freestanding birth centers increased by less than ten percent, we would realize an annual savings of more than \$9 billion. A 2008 study commissioned by the state of Washington found that its licensed midwife program generates a savings of more than \$3 million to private and public insurers each biennium.

“With all of the talk about the importance of end-of-life issues,” said Dr. Allemann, “It’s time for us to also recognize that giving everyone a good start at the beginning of life has far-reaching implications for our health care system. Including out-of-hospital maternity care and Certified Professional Midwives in health care reform is a small but very important first step.”

The Big Push for Midwives Campaign represents thousands of grassroots advocates in the United States who support expanding access to Certified Professional Midwives and out-of-hospital maternity care. The mission of The Big Push includes educating the public and policymakers about the reduced costs and improved outcomes associated with out-of-hospital birth and Certified Professional Midwives, the maternity care providers trained to provide that service. Media inquiries: Katherine Prown (414) 550-8025, katie@thebigpushformidwives.org

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