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## **Home Birth Safety Act Draws Unprecedented Support**

### South Dakota Poised to Join 25 Other States in Strengthening Out-of-Hospital Maternity Care Standards

PIERRE, SD — At 7:45 a.m. on Tuesday, February 10, the Home Birth Safety Act (House Bill 1179) will be debated in the Health and Human Services Committee in Room 412 at the Capitol, as families across the state make plans to converge on the Capitol to call on their lawmakers to license and regulate Certified Professional Midwives (CPMs), who are trained as specialists in out-of-hospital maternity care.

Prime sponsor of the bill, Senator Larry Rhoden (R) is hearing these families very clearly. “This bill is a win-win for South Dakota. It gives families that have made the decision to deliver their babies at home the ability to hire a professional, which in turn makes home birth safer in South Dakota.”

According to the Department of Health, the infant death rate for out-of-hospital births from 2001 to 2005 was three times the state’s average. “These numbers are appalling,” said Debbie Pease, Co-Chair of South Dakota Safe Childbirth Options (SDSCO). “Unfortunately, they are directly related to the inability of our home birth families to gain legal access to quality prenatal and maternity care from professional midwives who are nationally certified.”

Representative Roger Hunt (R), prime sponsor in the House, agreed. “Families in our state are giving birth at home for a wide range of reasons, often due to financial, cultural, philosophical or practical concerns. They deserve the protection provided by having access to licensed Certified Professional Midwives.”

Under current law, families who deliver their babies outside of the hospital must do without the assistance of a licensed midwife.

In 1998, a Legislative Research Summer Study was completed by a joint Health and Human Services committee, which recommended a **do pass** of midwifery registration legislation. In 2008, a bill was passed that allowed Certified Nurse Midwives (CNMs), who are trained in hospital settings, to deliver babies for families choosing out-of-hospital birth. However, with only one CNM in the state who provides home birth services, the law falls short. “We need a law that gives real options to home birth families statewide,” said Travis Brink, the father of four children born at home.

“South Dakota should not be criminalizing childbirth,” said Representative Bill Thompson (D). “Certified Professional Midwives have a beneficial impact in the majority of our states, and South Dakota should be able to benefit, too.”

Certified Professional Midwives are legally authorized to practice in 25 states, with 18 states introducing or planning legislation for CPM licensure this year.

Media inquiries about South Dakota Safe Childbirth Options should be directed to Debbie Pease at (605) 563-2363, [chair@sdsafebirth.org](mailto:chair@sdsafebirth.org).

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