Bill Number: 7148: AN ACT CONCERNING THE STATE BUDGET FOR THE BIENNIOUM ENDING JUNE THIRTIETH, 2021, AND MAKING APPROPRIATIONS THEREFOR.

Chairs and members of the Appropriations Committee,

I am writing to ask for your support of Bill Number: 7148: AN ACT CONCERNING THE STATE BUDGET FOR THE BIENNIOUM ENDING JUNE THIRTIETH, 2021, AND MAKING APPROPRIATIONS THEREFOR.

As a certified nurse midwife (CNM) in both private practice and at a clinic where I work with an underserved population, I have seen the benefits that CNMs provide to women and their families. Our dedication, commitment, and skills improve access to women’s reproductive health, which leads to improved maternal and child health outcomes. In 2017 alone, licensed midwives attended 9.6% of all births in Connecticut, and 14.6% of all vaginal births. The DSS reimbursement for vaginal birth is $7,870, compared to $10,973 for c/s births. Studies show that women cared for by Licensed Midwives have lower rates of cesarean deliveries, induction rates, anesthesia use and higher breastfeeding rates. This could save the DSS money while providing high quality care that leads to higher satisfaction in women who seek out our care. Midwives provide many types of women’s healthcare beyond maternity care: contraceptive coverage, annual well-woman exams, STI testing, breastfeeding support, domestic violence screening, cervical cancer screening, breast cancer risk assessment, and other women’s preventive health care.

Unfortunately, cuts in reimbursement rates from Medicaid in 2015 along with the rate disparity has forced practices to limit, reduce, or not participate in serving those clients with Medicaid. By expanding the use of CNMs in the state of Connecticut, state money is saved, new graduates are more likely to stay in Connecticut, and healthcare systems and physicians who employ midwives are able to continue to care for this population.

Medicaid payment for midwives is equal to that of Physicians in Rhode Island, New Hampshire, Vermont, Maine and Massachusetts. Please consider doing the same for Connecticut midwives.

I urge the Committee and Connecticut lawmakers to support Bill 7148.

Thank you for your time,

Kristen Becker-Talwalkar, CNM