SB 7148: AN ACT CONCERNING THE STATE BUDGET FOR THE BIENNIUM ENDING JUNE THIRTIETH, 2021, AND MAKING APPROPRIATIONS THEREFOR.

Chairs and Members of the Appropriations Committee,

I write to urge allowance within the upcoming state budget to eliminate the discounted rate of reimbursement that Connecticut’s nurse-midwives receive compared to physicians, for the same services.

My name is Suzannah Holsenbeck Blocker and I have been a patient of nurse-midwives since my first pregnancy three years ago. My gynecologist at the time I became pregnant recommended a nurse-midwife practice to me in New Haven and the care I received from the midwives at this practice throughout two successful pregnancies, labors and deliveries has left an indelible impression on me.

When I was seven months pregnant with my first child, my family experienced a life-altering event when a drunk driver crashed into our living room in the middle of the night. Thankfully no one was injured, but our home was destroyed and we were displaced. The very next day I received a check-in call from the midwives, and their genuine compassion throughout the ongoing aftermath of this traumatic event helped me to establish some sense of calm. I ended up needing to be induced due to elevated blood pressure related to the accident, and the support I received from the midwives who attended my long labor made all the difference in the world. Despite feeling like things were completely out of my control in my life, the medical decisions my midwives made and the care they gave me ensured that I avoided a cesarean and delivered a healthy baby boy. And perhaps of equal importance: I felt respected, supported and empowered throughout my birth experience.

The midwives who care for me care equally for women from all walks of life. When I went for the ultrasounds for my first pregnancy at the Yale Women’s Maternal & Fetal Health Office, every doctor that reviewed my scans came in to tell me I had made the right decision to go with this particular midwife practice and even one of the OB/GYNs shared with me that she was a patient with the same nurse-midwife practice for her own pregnancy. When I went to have my blood drawn, the phlebotomist saw who my midwives were on my paperwork and raved about the care she had received throughout her high risk pregnancy. The parent of one of my students shared with me how touched her family was when one of the midwives came to the funeral of her sister’s daughter, whose birth the midwives had attended.

It is astounding to me that nurse-midwives in Connecticut are currently not reimbursed at the same rate as OB/GYNs for the care they give patients. The states all around us in New England have stopped this deduction, and so has Medicare; women in Connecticut should have the same access to midwives and their special brand of care. The data is clear: nurse midwives are part of the solution to the awful, inequitable outcomes for maternal and fetal health in communities of color.

Please consider how the investment in nurse-midwives will quickly save money for Connecticut and stop the unfair deduction in reimbursement to these high quality healthcare providers. Thank you for your time.