Testimony for public hearing
Appropriations committee
March 5, 2019

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Bill number 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 in support of bill 7148:
An act concerning the state budget for the biennium ending June thirtieth, 2021, and making appropriations therefor.

Please include funds in the budget to equalize reimbursement rates for Nurse-Midwives in the Medicaid program.

I am a certified nurse-midwife practicing in the greater Hartford area. Certified nurse midwives/certified midwives should receive equal reimbursement as OB/GYNs for the same services at the same rate as OB/GYNs for many reasons:
- Improve access for Women's reproductive health in the state of CT and to improve maternal and child health outcomes, specifically in communities of color.
- Save the state money by expanding the use of CNMs/CMs in CT.
- Attract and retain new graduates and promote midwifery in CT.
- Improve viability of practices, healthcare systems who employ midwives.

In CT, fees billed to medicaid are reimbursed at 90% of the physician rate for the exact same services rendered. Medicare reimburses CNMs at 100%. Our neighboring states of VT, NH, MA, RI and Maine all have Medicaid reimbursement equal to that of physicians.

Multiple studies have concluded that midwives achieve similar outcomes as physicians and equal or higher rates of patient satisfaction at a net lower cost.

Multiple studies and systematic reviews have found that midwifery care results in fewer inductions of labor, more vaginal births and fewer cesareans, increased breastfeeding, fewer preterm births, high patient satisfaction and higher rates of vaginal birth after cesarean deliveries. All of which are cost savings to the state.

Midwives provide many types of women's healthcare beyond maternity care: contraception care, annual preventive exams which include breast and pelvic exams, cervical cancer screening, STI testing, domestic violence screening, breast cancer risk assessment among other services. Equal reimbursement would allow our practice in Hartford to see more Medicaid patients. Currently we turn patients away for preventive gynecologic care if they have Medicaid. We want to provide access to care to help reduce the number of unplanned pregnancies, sexually transmitted infections, cervical cancer, increase early detection of breast cancer, and prevent the continuation of domestic violence. Prevention is more cost effective but often neglected due to lack of access.

Nurse midwives save the state money by serving communities of diverse socio-economic status, including underserved communities. These same communities suffer from an increased number of costly pre and post natal complications. Private physicians no longer serve patients in these communities because they are unable to sustain a viable practice due to decreasing reimbursement rates.
The disparity in reimbursement is an obstacle for autonomous midwifery practices to expand their care, for physician owned practices to hire midwives, attract experienced midwives to CT and to entice new graduates to stay within CT after completing their degrees at Yale or Fairfield University. As mentioned earlier, surrounding states offer 100% Medicaid reimbursement thus making those states more desirable to set up shop.

I urge you to support Bill 7148. "An ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure" - Ben Franklin. Thank you all for your time and attention on this important bill.