

February 26, 2024

Sen. Liz Boldon
3201 Minnesota Senate Building
St Paul, MN 55155

Rep. Esther Agbaje
437 State Office Building
Saint Paul, MN 55155

Dear Senator Boldon and Representative Agbaje,

On behalf of Hennepin County, we want to personally thank you for authoring HF1324 / SF1743, legislation that would create a new route for midwifery licensure for Certified Midwives in Minnesota. As the most populace county in Minnesota, Hennepin County supports increased access to midwifery care for low-risk pregnancies as part of an integrated system of maternity care.

Hennepin County's population is diverse. We are fortunate to have large populations representing African and Latino cultures. Nearly 15% of our residents identify as Black, which is higher than the 6.41% of all Minnesota residents. There are higher rates of maternal mortality and morbidity and other adverse birth outcomes among people of color in Minnesota and across the United States. Often, the concerns of pregnant people of color are dismissed by providers when they speak up about problems during the birthing process. We have heard through our health system Community Health Needs Assessment that pregnant women of color would like more culturally specific care teams. Having an alternative pathway to midwifery licensure will reduce education costs and length of time to get into this important field, opening the door for more midwives of color to serve our families in Hennepin County.

Fifty years ago, Hennepin County Medical Center (HCMC) was the first health system in Minnesota to incorporate Certified Nurse Midwives into the care team and it is our hope that this legislation will continue to build upon this important model of care and improve outcomes for our residents. We need models of care that promote, protect, and support the health and positive outcomes for pregnant people and respect their ethnic and cultural diversity. Improving birth outcomes is a high priority for our county and we are doing a number of pilots to evaluate the impact they have on birth outcomes.

Our health system is offering a Culturally Congruent Virtual African American Doula Program and a group prenatal care pilot out of the Redleaf Center for Family Healing, and we are building a culturally responsive care model for



Somali, East African, and other Muslim patients experiencing mental health concerns during and after pregnancy.

Hennepin County believes this legislation will improve access to maternity care in under-resourced areas, reduce the risk of maternal mortality and morbidity, lower costs and potentially improve the health of birthing people and babies. Hennepin County encourages legislators to assess statutes related to midwifery care to ensure they promote access to these services for women who desire them in a manner that is safe for both the birthing person and their baby.

Certified Midwives have a long record of safety and efficacy in many other states and the education pathway, certification boards and scope of practice are the same as Certified Nurse Midwives. We would like to grow midwifery by allowing for Certified Midwife licensure in Minnesota as well. If you have questions for us, please reach out to Susie Emmert (c. 651-278-5422) or Liz Young (c. 612-559-0447).

Sincerely,



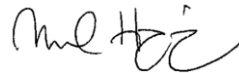
Commissioner Irene Fernando
Chair, Hennepin County Board



Jennifer DeCubellis
Chief Executive Officer
Hennepin Healthcare System



Stella Whitney-West
Chief Executive Officer
NorthPoint Health and Wellness Center



Michael Herzing
Interim Chief Executive Officer
Hennepin Health