

American Association of Birth Centers

America's Birth Center Resource



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October, 2009

Dear Senators and Representatives:

We, the undersigned physicians, are concerned about access to health care for pregnant women served by our Medicaid system. Each of us either serves as a consultant/collaborating physician for a freestanding birth center or midwife practice, or wishes to express support for the concept of freestanding birth centers and consumer access to midwifery care. We have signed this letter to show our support for federal legislation that would restore Medicaid funding to birth centers.

Just as hospitals have various costs – for supplies, equipment, salaries of nurses and other staff, overhead – that are already reimbursed by Medicaid, freestanding birth centers incur similar costs. Both hospitals and birth centers are facilities where Medicaid recipients may be admitted to give birth but, at the present time, only hospitals are eligible for reimbursement of Medicaid fees. Not only is this discrepancy unfair to Medicaid recipients who would prefer to deliver their babies in birth centers, it is also a serious public health issue whether viewed in terms of outcomes or cost savings for the Medicaid system. Many birth centers in the U.S. serve patient populations that include a high percentage of Medicaid recipients, some as high as 75% to 90%.

Outcomes. [Several highly-regarded studies](#) have demonstrated that birth centers have excellent outcomes, including birth centers that serve low income and other vulnerable populations noted for their health disparities. Citations to these studies are provided as an attachment to this letter. Birth centers have low cesarean section rates. They are also particularly good at reducing the incidence of low birth weight and preterm newborns and at helping mothers initiate and continue breastfeeding for their infants. As physicians, we are well-satisfied that birth centers provide high quality care for the women they serve.

Cost-savings. As the [attached summary](#) regarding the D.C. Developing Families Center demonstrates, birth centers not only improve maternity care, they do so in a cost-efficient manner. Funding birth centers will result in long-term cost savings because babies delivered at birth centers tend to be healthy and do not require the expensive services of Neonatal Intensive Care Units (NICU). A recent report, [Evidence-Based Maternity Care: What It Is and What It Can Achieve](#), jointly published by the Childbirth Connection, the Reforming States Group, and the Milbank Memorial Fund, points out that birth center charges are considerably lower than hospital charges for birthing services.

As physicians who care about preserving access to quality health care for all women and newborns in the United States, we have joined together in support of this legislation. We urge you to co-sponsor and support this bill.

Respectfully,

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