



NEWS RELEASE

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LEADING MIDWIFERY ORGANIZATION APPLAUDS BILL TO ADDRESS MATERNITY CARE SHORTAGE

American College of Nurse-Midwives Believes Underserved Women Deserve Access

Silver Spring, MD – The American College of Nurse-Midwives (ACNM) strongly supports bipartisan legislation introduced yesterday in Congress that would identify areas of the country where women do not have access to qualified maternity care providers, including midwives and OB/GYNs.

The bill, *Improving Access to Maternity Care Act of 2015*, (S. 628, H.R. 1209) was introduced by Senators Mark Kirk (R-IL) and Tammy Baldwin (D-WI) and by Representative Michael Burgess (R-TX) and Representative Lois Capps (D-CA).

The bill would establish a health professional shortage area designation for maternity care services, similar to shortage designations that exist for primary care, dental and mental health services. This designation would help to identify areas in the US that experience significant shortage to full scope maternity care professionals, including certified nurse-midwives (CNMs) and certified midwives (CMs). The designation would also identify areas experiencing shortages of hospital or birth center labor and delivery units.

“As midwives working in urban and rural areas across the US, we thank these Members of Congress for championing this bill which will directly support many women who lack adequate maternity care services in their cities and rural towns,” said Ginger Breedlove, PhD, CNM, APRN, FACNM, and president of ACNM. “Identifying and obtaining essential information on areas that are underserved is the first step toward addressing this major public health concern. We believe this bill would help to give all women and their babies access to the maternity services they need and deserve.”

Breedlove added that the bill would also enable the federal government to target valuable resources to areas of greatest need. “By expanding access to maternity care professionals, we can reduce extremely high maternity care costs in the US by ensuring that all women can receive supportive prenatal and delivery services,” Breedlove said. “ACNM hopes that Congress will act on this bill quickly.”

Eugene Declercq, PhD, a professor in Boston University’s School of Public Health, found that in 2011, 56 percent of US counties had no CNMs, 46 percent of counties had no OB/GYNs and 40 percent of counties had neither a CNM nor an OB/GYN to provide direct patient care. For millions of women, shortages of maternity care providers can result in long waiting times for appointments and long travel times to prenatal care and/or birthing sites.

In 2013, the Medicaid Payment and CHIP Payment and Access Commission (MACPAC) noted that access to maternity care professionals is a significant issue in many areas of the country due to the changing demographics of maternity care providers, variation among practice environments, regionalization and closure of many maternity care units.

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For more information, please contact ACNM Media Relations, Social Media & Marketing Specialist Damaris Hay at 240-485-1856 or dhay@acnm.org.

The American College of Nurse-Midwives (ACNM) is the professional association that represents certified nurse-midwives (CNMs) and certified midwives (CMs) in the United States. ACNM promotes excellence in midwifery education, clinical practice, and research. With roots dating to 1929, our members are primary care providers for women throughout the lifespan, with a special emphasis on pregnancy, childbirth, and gynecologic and reproductive health. ACNM provides research, administers and promotes continuing education programs, establishes clinical practice standards, and creates liaisons with state and federal agencies and members of Congress to increase the visibility and recognition of midwifery care.

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