



January 25, 2017

The Honorable Paul Ryan
Speaker of the House
United States House of Representatives
U.S. Capitol Building, H-232
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable Nancy Pelosi
House Minority Leader
United States House of Representatives
U.S. Capitol Building, H-204
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable Mitch McConnell
Senate Majority Leader
United States Senate
U.S. Capitol Building, S-230
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Chuck Schumer
Senate Minority Leader
United States Senate
U.S. Capitol Building, S-221
Washington, D.C. 20510

Dear House Speaker Ryan, Senate Majority Leader McConnell, House Minority Leader Pelosi and Senate Minority Leader Schumer:

On behalf of the members of the American College of Nurse-Midwives (ACNM), I write to express concern regarding possible changes to the Affordable Care Act (ACA) and other critical health programs that would impair women's access to essential health care services to the detriment of our country. ACNM urges lawmakers to act in a manner that supports the significant gains made for women's health in the U.S. Specifically, repeal of the ACA without a replacement policy evaluated for its effects on care for women and newborns places at significant peril the health of women and the sustainability of our health system.

[Midwifery Supports Women Throughout the Lifespan, Promotes Safety and Healthy Outcomes, and is a Significant Part of the Solution to the Health Care Costs Problem](#)

ACNM is the professional association that represents certified nurse-midwives (CNMs) and certified midwives (CMs) in the United States. With roots dating to 1929, ACNM sets the standard for excellence in midwifery education and practice in the United States and strengthens the capacity of midwives in developing countries. Our members are primary care providers for women throughout the lifespan, with an emphasis on pregnancy, childbirth, and gynecologic and reproductive health care.

CNMs are independent health care providers with prescriptive authority in all 50 states and Washington, D.C. CNMs and CMs are nationally certified and the profession has required a

master's degree for entry into practice since 2010. Private health insurance plans typically cover midwifery services in addition to the Medicare and Medicaid programs. Midwifery services are a mandatory service under the Medicaid program as more than half of all births each year are financed by the program.

Today there are some 12,000 CNMs/CMs in the U.S. These midwives attend over 330,000 births in the U.S. annually. Nearly all midwifery births occur in the hospital, with some in birth centers and others in homes. Midwives promote healthy physiologic birth. By doing so, they help reduce the incidence of unnecessary caesarean sections and other interventions. Healthy physiologic birth means healthier moms and newborns, fewer complications and side-effects, and much lower health care costs.

Research findings demonstrate the many ways that midwives and midwifery contribute to positive health outcomes and help address the national problem of health care cost growth.

Comparing national benchmarking data of 90 midwifery practices to national survey and birth data on obstetric procedures, women receiving care from CNMs/CMs had lower than the national average rate for episiotomy (3.6% compared to 25%). They also experienced lower than the national average rate for primary cesarean (9.9% compared to 32%), and higher than the national average rate of breastfeeding initiation (78.6% compared to 51%). CNMs and CMs also have lower cesarean birth rates, producing significant cost savings.

Among the 234 midwifery practices reporting on 97,158 births in ACNM's 2013 benchmarking data, the median rate of cesarean procedures was 11.8%. In 2014 the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention determined there were 2,699,951 vaginal deliveries and 1,284,551 cesarean deliveries or 32.2% of all births. Midwives can create cost savings within the health care system through high quality, evidence-based care that is in alignment with national recommendations for appropriate rates of cesarean delivery and intervention utilization.

[As Congress Considers Health Care Legislation, ACNM Requests that Congress Put First the Interests of Women and Newborns by Protecting Women's Access to Care, Preventative Services, Medicare and Medicaid Services Coverage, and Reproductive and Sexual Health Benefits](#)

ACNM understands that Congress plans to act to address the rising costs of health insurance and health care. **We want you to know that midwives will stand for improving access to quality care and coverage for women and newborns, for eliminating unnecessary barriers to midwifery in the health system, and for strengthening our health care workforce especially in underserved parts of our country.**

As you begin this important work ACNM urges you to be mindful of the following:

- ✓ Women currently have coverage for critical health services, including maternity care, prescription drugs, and chronic disease management. Before the health reform law,

only about 12% of health care plans sold in the individual market offered maternity coverage, and women paid about \$1 billion more than men each year for similar health plans in the individual market. Today, fewer than 8% of women and girls are uninsured, an historic low, and the law prohibits plans from charging higher premiums to beneficiaries for being women. **ACNM requests that Congress continue to protect women's access to full coverage and care.**

- ✓ Women currently have access to all Food and Drug Administration-approved methods of birth control without out-of-pocket costs. Implementation of the birth control benefit has caused significant improvements in birth control coverage and access for many women. **ACNM requests that Congress continue to require plans cover birth control as a benefit, as well as the full range of reproductive and sexual health services for women. These services are crucial for women, men, and families, and sharing their costs and risks across all beneficiaries promotes health by reducing barriers to people obtaining the care that they need. As people's access to reproductive and sexual health services is so important, especially for persons within vulnerable populations, ACNM opposes efforts to render Planned Parenthood ineligible for federal funding.**
- ✓ Women currently access a range of preventive services without worry of copays or deductibles. These include well-woman visits, gestational diabetes screening, domestic and interpersonal violence screening and counseling, breastfeeding support, and other valuable screenings that will save lives, aid in treatment, and save money for the health care system. **ACNM requests that Congress continue to require plans cover preventative services for women.**
- ✓ Senior women and those with disabilities currently access well-woman services provided by midwives within the Medicare program as fair reimbursement has made it possible for these professionals to participate in the program. **ACNM requests that Congress ensure women who are Medicare beneficiaries continue having their midwife-provided services covered by Medicare as they are today.**
- ✓ Many more women currently can access needed health care services via the expansion of the Medicaid program. Medicaid now covers 17% of the nation's non-elderly women. Women have benefited substantially as more women rely on Medicaid coverage than men. **ACNM requests that Congress support a strong Medicaid program, which covers half of the childbirths in the United States. By covering services for women in vulnerable populations, Medicaid not only supports better health for women and children but also reduces costs and complications associated with missing needed prenatal and postnatal care – important benefits that midwives can provide.**

There is no question that the health care reform law can be improved. As Congress considers opportunities for improvement of health care coverage for this nation, it is critical to move forward and not backwards. Putting the care of women first allows our nation to promote and improve health for entire families. Women are generally the ones to access services on behalf

of their families and healthy families are the foundation for a healthy workforce and population. ACNM and its members stand ready to work with Congress and the Administration to prioritize the health care of women through improvement of laws and programs that support access to affordable coverage and excellent care midwives can provide. No reform of the current law should come at the expense of the health and wellbeing of women and newborns.

Please contact Patrick Cooney, ACNM's Federal Representative, at 202-413-2629 or via email at Patrick@federalgrp.com, if you have questions regarding midwifery care.

Sincerely,



Lisa Kane Low, CNM, PhD
President, American College of Nurse-Midwives

CC: Chairman and Ranking Members of the following committees:
House Ways and Means Committee
House Energy and Commerce Committee
Senate Health, Education, Labor & Pensions Committee
Senate Finance Committee