



# NEWS RELEASE

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## **MIDWIVES APPLAUD HOUSE INTRODUCTION OF MEDICARE EQUITY LEGISLATION**

**Silver Spring, MD** – The American College of Nurse-Midwives (ACNM), the nation’s oldest women’s health organization, applauds Rep. Ed Towns (D-NY) and Rep. Fred Upton (R-MI) on the bipartisan introduction of their legislation, the **“Midwifery Care Access and Reimbursement Equity Act of 2009,” (H.R. 1101)**. This legislation will improve access for Medicare beneficiaries to the vital women’s health services offered by certified nurse-midwives (CNM) and certified midwives (CM) by remedying a long-standing reimbursement rate inequity between midwives and other licensed health care professionals within the Medicare program.

“Providing equitable reimbursement for the high quality primary care services provided by certified nurse-midwives (CNMs) and certified midwives (CMs) will help ensure that their services are available to women,” according to ACNM President Melissa Avery, CNM, PhD, FACNM. “Health disparities in the US continue to be a critical problem. Midwives have historically cared for those populations at greatest risk for health disparities in areas of maternal and infant mortality, breast and cervical cancers, and HIV/AIDS infection among women.”

Avery adds that, “The House of Representatives took a big step to pass this legislation as part of the Children’s Health and Medicare Protection (CHAMP) Act during the 110<sup>th</sup> Congress. We look forward to the day when President Obama can sign this legislation into law, with the support of the 111<sup>th</sup> Congress.” Avery recognizes the significant grassroots effort by midwives and their supporters that led to House approval.

Representative Ed Towns says, “As a fervent champion of quality women’s health services, I am both honored and proud to reintroduce this fine piece of legislation. The Midwifery Care Access and Reimbursement Act will not only advance women’s health services — particularly among those most disadvantaged — but it will give midwives the recognition and equitable reimbursement they have long deserved.”

Since 1988, the Medicare program has authorized midwifery care to address the maternity needs of disabled women of childbearing age who qualify for coverage. In 1993, Congress authorized midwives to provide additional services outside the maternity cycle for all women under Medicare. While the majority of states reimburse midwives at the same rate as physician counterparts under state Medicaid plans, a 35% disparity in reimbursement exists within the Medicare program. This payment inequity is a barrier to women’s access and choice of provider within the program.

Certified nurse-midwives and certified midwives provide primary and gynecologic care to women of all ages, as well as prenatal and delivery services. Certified nurse midwives attended 317,168 births in 2006 – a 33 % increase since 1996.

For more information about the new legislation, midwives or midwifery in America, visit [www.midwife.org](http://www.midwife.org).

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With roots dating to 1929, the American College of Nurse-Midwives is the oldest women's health care association in the U.S. ACNM's mission is to promote the health and well-being of women and infants within their families and communities through the development and support of the profession of midwifery as practiced by certified nurse-midwives and certified midwives. Midwives believe every individual has the right to safe, satisfying health care with respect for human dignity and cultural variations. More information about ACNM can be found at [www.midwife.org](http://www.midwife.org).