



February 9, 2005

The Honorable John Ensign  
U.S. Senate  
Washington, D.C. 20510

Dear Senator Ensign:

I am writing on behalf of the members of the American College of Nurse-Midwives (ACNM) to express deep appreciation and strong support for the "Help Efficient, Accessible, Low Cost, Timely Healthcare (HEALTH) Act of 2005," which you introduced in the U.S. Senate today.

As premiums continue to rise out of control for certified nurse-midwives and certified midwives, ACNM believes it is time for Congress to take action. The situation is particularly critical for those women who lose access to and choice of their health care professional, especially for women of childbearing age.

Between 2001 and 2003, the national provider of professional liability insurance for midwives increased premiums some 180 percent. At this rate of increase, it will not take long before women will be unable to find health professionals to address their basic health care needs.

Passage of the HEALTH Act would provide necessary relief from skyrocketing premiums that challenge the ability of midwives to practice. While ACNM supports the legislation in its entirety, midwives are particularly supportive of provisions that establish a reasonable limit the number of years an individual has the right to file suit against a health care professional after an injury. Presently in most states, midwives are subject to lawsuits for the first 21 years of an individual's life. This sometimes requires a midwife to carry liability insurance coverage well after retirement from practice.

In addition, ACNM supports the establishment of limits on non-economic damages, mandating offsets for collateral sources, limitations on contingency fees, creation of periodic payment of future damages, and establishment of alternative dispute resolutions.

Thank you again for your continuing leadership on this important matter.

Sincerely,

Deanne R. Williams, CNM, MS, FACNM  
Executive Director