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The Honorable Melony Griffith
Chair, Senate Finance Committee
Miller Senate Office Building, 3 East
11 Bladen Street
Annapolis, MD 21401

Dear Chair Griffith and Members of the Committee:

I am writing you in support of SB0376.

What I am about to share is lengthy, but it has been the most traumatic set of events in my life and I believe there is value in sharing it to provide perspective on the positive impact of the aforementioned bill.

In April of last year, I was 16wks pregnant and went to my local hospital three times in a matter of 12 days with persistent high fevers and debilitating abdominal pain. I was sent home every time. In those 12 days, I experienced an ER technician blowing his breath on my arm prior to collecting blood cultures, a pelvic exam with water from the sink due to the lack of gel in the room, and a thermometer set for rectal temperature placed in my mouth with no protective cover.

On April 27th, at 19 wks, I went in for a follow up appointment with my OB and I was told my baby didn't have a heartbeat. They gave me time to call my partner and then coldly gave me a paper map so I could find Labor & Delivery (L&D). I left the office in shock. I called my family, inconsolable, while driving around frantically trying to find the Labor & Delivery area of the hospital. Once at L&D, I was sent to a room where I waited for doctors to confirm the lack of heartbeat. They admittedly forgot about me and didn't know I was waiting on them to take the appropriate next steps. I was sent to Maternal Fetal Medicine (MFM) for an amniocentesis and the OBs at L&D told me they would give them a heads up that I was on my way. When I got to the MFM, the receptionist had no idea why I was there, so I had to re-explain my already painful details to her in the lobby with other patients. Once done with the MFM, I went home to pack a hospital bag.

When I arrived at the hospital the OB induced me and I elected to have an epidural. The emotional pain of losing the baby was already enough for me, so I opted to at least numb half of my body. A half hour after the epidural, the very apologetic anesthesiologist came to remove it because they had JUST found out I had an infection that had spread to my blood. I had sepsis. Now, as a traumatized first-time mom, and having had no time to prepare myself for a trial of labor, I had no idea what to expect. The nurses just told me to be careful when I went to the bathroom. The pains that I figured were contractions, started. Before I could even make sense of the timing and pain, I birthed my little Andres. The nurses came in to check on me and took the baby to wrap him in cute hospital garments. We decided we wanted time to hold him and after a couple of days, we told several staff members that we wanted to cremate him at a specific funeral home. What followed was an unbelievable chain of "drop the ball" moments, on top of the already painful loss of my baby.

Since I had to stay in the hospital due to the infection, I decided to shower at some point. Stepping out of the shower, my foot slipped, I fell and hit my head. I later read the nurse's report, she stated that I went to the toilet, tripped on a towel, jumped in the shower and refused care. Not what happened and both my mother and my partner can confirm.

After being allowed to leave the hospital on May 1st, I had to call 911 on May 2nd, because my fever returned. I waited in line with my two EMTs for 3+ hours before they could get me in a room. In the meantime, I called my OB's emergency line and the doctor hung up on me twice for reasons I still do not understand. My mom was finally allowed to join me at 11pm and she stayed with me until the hospital staff kicked her out at 6am because I was being admitted and the hospital did not allow visitors until 9am. By this point, I did not have the strength to make sense or argue this, so I told my mom to return during "visiting" hours. Looking back, she was not a visitor, she was my support person during a time where I needed the most support. The hospital staff transported me through the basement of the hospital to my

new room at the very end of the Mother/Baby wing. I was left in that room for what felt like hours, until nurses and doctors came in to introduce themselves around 8am. This time, they told me I needed a doctor's order to shower...maybe they forgot to share during my last stay at the hospital. A couple of days later, my IV line became occluded and they offered to set up another one. Three people tried to set up the line, each poking me and fishing for a vein three times. I still have flashbacks of that agonizing pain. Finally, someone offered up IV therapy and I quickly realized the physical abuse and trauma I had just endured was based solely on the fact that nobody wanted to call this genius technician with a clear visual map of where my vein was located.

Once I finally left the hospital, I went to the funeral home on May 9th to ensure they had everything they needed. Funeral home told me the hospital never did anything to release my son...so he had been sitting there since April 27th so nobody did anything with the information we gave them while I was being treated.

On May 25th, I went in for my postpartum appointment, and the nurse checking me in asked if I was breastfeeding. Insult to injury. Any hope I had to stay with this practice, quickly dissipated upon hearing those words. Clearly, she forgot to read in my chart that dead babies don't need milk.

As a result of medical advice stemming from these general events, I underwent laparoscopic myomectomy on July 27th at a different hospital and I am now stuck with a blind recommendation for a c-section at 37 weeks for future pregnancies. This is why I am asking you to consider doing all you can to ensure this bill is approved. Women and mothers like me deserve the opportunity to have individualized care in an environment where they feel safe, heard and supported. I recognize that place is not the same for everyone. I can only speak for myself (and advocate for others) and I would love to have the option to birth my children with the support of midwifery care, away from the sometimes-obtuse medical model and away from the self-preserving hospital protocols.

I come from a family of service: my mother is a nurse that retired from the VA hospital, my father was a police officer in Puerto Rico, my soon-to-be husband is a police officer in Maryland, and I am a proud Coast Guard service member. I value your service and appreciate your support in an effort to continue expanding midwifery care. Please let me (and others like me) have a chance at experiencing birth on our terms, with our informed choices, and with the individualized care and empathetic & confident support of the midwifery model.

Thank you for taking the time to learn about my story and thank you for supporting this initiative.

Very respectfully,

Marvi Milagros Rivera