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

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Dear Chair Griffith and Members of the Committee:

I am a Maryland LDEM and Virginia LM, and I have been regularly attending home VBAC my entire birthwork career. My first birth as a doula 13 years ago was a home VBAC (HBAC). I then regularly attended HBACs in my own midwifery training in Germany, England, and in Virginia at a birth center. What is different there is that they put human rights and parental choice above the potential discomfort of a care provider.

I am currently working with a joint CNM/LDEM practice with stellar statistics spanning 12 years that include:

- 623 total home births
- 5.8% cesarean rate
- 64 VBACs completed at home (88% success)
- 6 transferred for safe appropriate repeat cesarean, thanks in part to the collaboration relationship we have personally fostered with our two most local hospitals.

Because I have always been attending VBACs at home in some primary care or support capacity, I already have a robust informed choice document that helps clients make the choice that is right for them. It is four pages long. Sometimes, the right choice is actually a planned repeat cesarean. But we need to be clear that pregnancy after cesarean also has its own risks. A planned cesarean has its own risks. An emergency cesarean has its own risks. A very first pregnancy has its own risks. Midwives excel at and take pride in helping clients understand their individual risk within their individual situation, via the one-on-one care that we have the luxury of providing. This is what keeps homebirth safe.

I also regret to announce that we have recently lost two beloved safe VBAC-attending homebirth CNMs in Maryland to retirement. The area I practice in is now relying on one single CNM to serve the HBAC desires of dozens of people. Yes, we can continue to have people moving into trailers just across the state line to West Virginia or Pennsylvania to give birth with LDEMs or unregulated midwives, but how is this protecting anyone's safety?

I urge your support for Senate Bill 376 on behalf of the hundreds of families who want a better chance at protecting their reproductive future.

Thank you,
Nikki Williams

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