

The Honorable Joseline Pena-Melnyk  
Chair, House Health and Government Operations Committee  
House Office Building, Room 241  
6 Bladen Street  
Annapolis, MD 21401

February 22, 2023

TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT: House Bill 351 – Health Occupations – Licensed Direct-Entry Midwives – Previous Cesarean Section

Dear Chair Pena-Melnyk and Members of the Committee:

HB351 is now up for consideration by your committee. It is an important bill that is promoting the broadening of the scope of practice of LDEMs (Licensed Direct Entry Midwives) in Maryland to attend the births of women who have had a previous Cesarean section. I am asking for you to support this bill. Vaginal birth after Cesarean (VBAC) is a safe option for women and infants and is made even more so with the safeguards that are built into this bill. This also allows for mothers to choose the method of delivery that is most appropriate and desirable to them. As an LDEM I am regularly contacted by potential clients who have had a previous Cesarean delivery and wish to have a VBAC. I am unable to attend them because of the limitation set on the practice of LDEMs in Maryland that does not allow us to attend such births. Many of the women I care for wish to have large families and are limited when the only option they have is repeated cesarean sections. There are also others who do not choose to have a repeat cesarean delivery for other reasons including the risks associated with such a procedure which includes, but is not limited to, higher rates of infections for mother and baby, placenta accreta, placenta previa, impaired neonatal respiratory function, greater blood loss, effects on maternal-fetal interactions, fetal lacerations and hysterectomy.

As a young mother I had an unnecessary Cesarean section for my first child and was desperate not to repeat the experience. When becoming pregnant in 1985 I decided I would have my baby at home. I chose a lay midwife and I also had the support of an obstetric doctor who did some prenatal exams and agreed to back up the midwife in the event that I would need medical help. As it turned out I had a wonderful and peaceful birth at home. At that time, there was no licensing of lay midwives in Maryland and there was not yet the national certification of such midwives who are now Certified Professional Midwives (CPM). This certification, by the North American Registry of Midwives, is now what Maryland and many other states rely on to license their midwives. You should also be aware that many of those midwives in other states are allowed to care for VBAC mothers.

Additionally, it is important for you to understand that the Maryland Board of Nursing (MBON) is wholeheartedly in support of expanding our scope to include VBAC and they are the board that we practice under. Furthermore, every year they collect statistics from all LDEMs and have been impressed with our results which informed them to support their decision. These results are publically available on the MBON.

website.

I hope you take all of this into consideration and find it useful in supporting and voting for our bill.

Sincerely,

Karen Carr, LDEM

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