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The Honorable Pamela Beidle
Chair, Senate Finance Committee
11 Bladen Street, 3 East
Annapolis, MD 21401

Dear Chair Beidle and Members of the Senate Finance Committee:

On behalf of our client, the Association of Independent Midwives of Maryland, the professional association for home birth midwives in Maryland and Maryland Families for Safe Birth, a patient advocacy organization aimed at promoting access and autonomy for maternal health care, please accept this letter of strong support for House Bill 1251, as amended by the House of Delegates.

HB1251 creates transparency for maternal patients by requiring hospitals to provide obstetric services to create and disclose policies that promote patient-centered care and better patient outcomes for both parents and newborns. The policies required in the bill establish the following protections:

1. Ensure patients are able to have a doula present for their birth, in addition to any authorized personal guests;
2. Ensure robust informed consent processes for significant birth interventions like c-sections and medical inductions;
3. Establish clear receiving policies at hospitals for patients transferring in from a home birth setting, which provides much needed reciprocity for the statutory transfer policies for License Direct-Entry Midwives, as unanimously passed by this Committee; and
4. Ensure transparency into liability insurance policies that may prevent both providers and patients from providing certain healthcare services.

This House Bill, which is a priority for both the Maryland Women's Caucus and the Maryland Legislative Black Caucus, is an important step in providing transparent, welcoming and safe birth environments in Maryland hospitals. The House amendments were developed collaboratively with key stakeholders, leading to no opposition to the bill and near unanimous passage by the full House of Delegates.

AIMM and MFSB thank the Committee for all its work in this important area of health care and urge a favorable report on House Bill 1251. Attached, please find personal letters from members of both organizations voicing their individual support for this legislation.