

The Honorable Joseline Pena-Melnyk
Chair, House Health and Government Operations Committee
House Office Building, Rm. 241
11 Bladen St
Annapolis, MD 21401

Re: House Bill 838

Dear Chair Pena-Melnyk and Members of the Committee:

Maryland Families for Safe Birth is submitting testimony in support of HB838. HB838 extends the sunset on licensure for Direct Entry Midwives in Maryland.

Maryland Families for Safe Birth is a grassroots, consumer-driven organization, dedicated to improving access to evidence based, culturally sensitive maternity care for all Maryland families. We have an active membership of over 1700 Maryland families. Our organization frequently gets inquiries from women looking for out of hospital birth providers, the majority of which are Direct Entry Midwives.

In 2015, the Maryland Legislature passed a bill licensing Direct Entry Midwives. This was a huge step forward for families in Maryland because it addressed the growing demand for out of hospital birth and provided licensed providers to attend these births. Even prior to 2015, homebirth rates in Maryland were on the rise (there was a 29% increase in the homebirth rate in Maryland between 2004 and 2009), and that increase has continued.

HB838 is a critical piece of legislation to continue to meet the growing demand for out of institution birth in Maryland. This bill also updates the statute to bring it more in line with the way that Direct Entry Midwives actually function within the maternal healthcare system in Maryland and allow more families to access care with at Direct Entry Midwife

We urge you to support HB838. Let's continue building on the progress we have already made for families that choose out of hospital birth.

Sincerely,

Maryland Families for Safe Birth

Kirra Brandon MD
Evie Fielding
Jen Chaffee
Ashley Baxter

Maryland's VBAC rate is 16.5% (2018 CDC data). In contrast, Direct Entry Midwives routinely have VBAC success rates upwards of 85% with excellent outcomes for both moms and babies.

Direct Entry Midwives in Maryland report a substantial increased interest in out-of-hospital birth during the COVID pandemic. If anything, COVID has taught us that the risk/benefit ratios for where we choose to give birth are not static. Yet, nearly 1/3 of women in Maryland are not afforded the option to weigh their own individual situation when choosing a care provider or birth location.

We urge you to support this bill. Let's increase access to maternity care options for Maryland families, not unnecessarily limit them.

Sincerely,

Maryland Families for Safe Birth

Kirra Brandon MD
Evie Fielding
Jennifer Chaffee