

# Alaska State Legislature

## Senator Pete Kelly

### *Interim*

1292 Sadler Way Ste. 308  
Fairbanks, Alaska 99701  
Phone - (907) 451-4347  
Fax - (907) 451-4348



### *Session*

State Capitol, Rm 516  
Juneau, AK 99801  
Phone - (907) 465-3709  
Fax - (907) 465-4714

Sen.Pete.Kelly@akleg.gov

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## Sponsor Statement – SB 156

*"An Act relating to direct-entry midwives."*

SB 156 will update and streamline the Certified Direct-entry Midwife ("CDM") practice act. The initial law was enacted in 1992, prior to establishing a functioning Board of Certified Direct-entry Midwives. Due to the lack of a professional board to set ongoing regulations at the time, a detailed set of practices were placed in Alaska Statute. The Board has tried to establish and develop a comprehensive regulatory framework through practice regulations and guidelines crafted to ensure public safety and professional discipline. However, the outdated statute cements certain obsolete practice requirements in place, and can only be updated by an act of the legislature.

SB 156 will neither lessen the regulatory governance of CDMs, nor will it expand their scope of practice. Rather, the bill clarifies regulatory intent and defines CDM scope of practice. SB 156 would give the board greater flexibility and efficiency by placing CDM required practices into regulation rather than statute. This enables the Board to oversee the profession more effectively and incorporate current nationally-recognized best practices. This type of authority is granted to most professional boards in order to develop and maintain professional practice standards.

The proposed changes in the bill will also ensure greater public safety in the field of midwifery. SB 156 requires a CDM to be licensed and practicing for two years and attend 50 or more births as a primary or assistant midwife in order to supervise an apprentice direct-entry midwife. Well-baby care will also be covered under the scope of CDM practice for up to 4 weeks after birth, which ensures the delivering midwife can properly follow up with both mother and baby. SB 156 repeals the cultural midwives exemption, requiring all CDMs in the state to be licensed and under the disciplinary regulation of the Board of CDMs. Currently, an individual whose cultural traditions have included, for at least two generations, the attendance of midwives at birth, and has assisted in at least 10 births does not fall under regulation of the board. The health and safety of all mothers and babies using midwifery services will be improved by holding all certified direct-entry midwives to a higher level of training and care.