

Dear members of the Alaska State legislature,

I am a constituent living in Juneau, Alaska. I was born and raised here and am now raising my family in this community I love. I am writing in opposition of executive order #130 and support House bill #175. I had my first of four babies at the age of 18 and have seen the profound impact midwifery care can have not only for young families, but also the entire community they serve. I now have four children and all of my births were attended by midwives. The care I received from my incredibly skilled and compassionate midwives shaped the person I am today. I credit them with laying the foundation that allowed me to find success as a young parent. Their impact on my life allowed me to feel confident and secure in a system that viewed me as another statistic and stereotyped my future and ability to succeed. Without their care, support, and encouragement I would not be the person I am today.

Stripping direct entry midwives of their governing board denies their autonomy as clinical medical professionals. Assuming that an administrative clerk working with the state of Alaska can take over and manage not only licensing but also grievances and regulation around midwifery care in Alaska is not only harmful to the profession it is also harmful to families in Alaska. The board of direct entry midwives serves as a body of professionals who are knowledgeable of the unique needs of midwives in Alaska. They serve on the board as midwives themselves which means they also understand the nuances surrounding regulation of scope of practice for midwives. It is vital that direct entry midwives maintain a governing body that can advocate for the profession and keep midwifery care accessible and available to all Alaskan families.

Alaska is a unique state and the way we provide health care to families and communities is also unique. We are not immune to the maternal mortality crisis that the United States is facing. Midwifery care provides relationship, place based, and culturally competent care. It also bridges the gap in care for communities where care is limited. Removing the governing body of direct entry midwives in Alaska leaves the profession without a board to advocate for appropriate regulation and scope of care. This opens the door for regulations that would hurt the profession and in turn Alaskan families.

An article by the Commonwealth fund outlines some of the major impacts expanding the role of midwives in the US could have on maternal outcomes. Below are some excerpts and a link to the full article.

“Maternal mortality rates are rising across all races and ethnicities in the U.S. — Black women are dying at nearly triple the rate of white women, and Native American women at double the rate. Additionally, data from maternal mortality review committees suggest that four of five pregnancy-related deaths are preventable.⁴”

“A recent analysis found that a midwife workforce, integrated into health care delivery systems, could provide 80 percent of essential maternal care around the world and potentially avert 41 percent of maternal deaths, 39 percent of neonatal deaths, and 26 percent of stillbirths.”

“Given the many benefits of midwives, and the profound maternal care inequities affecting Black and Indigenous families in the U.S., it’s important to understand how they could be better integrated into the U.S. health care system. This includes the intentional integration of midwifery across the complex health care ecosystem in order to ensure midwifery care is accessible, affordable, and equitable to all childbearing people.”

“states with highly integrated midwifery care — such as Washington, New Mexico, and Oregon — reported the best outcomes for mothers and infants, which included significantly higher rates of spontaneous vaginal delivery, vaginal birth after cesarean, and breastfeeding, and

significantly lower rates of cesarean, preterm birth, low birth weight infants, and neonatal death (Exhibit 2). On the other hand, states with restrictive midwife laws and practices — including Alabama, Mississippi, and Ohio — were found to have worse outcomes.²⁰

“Research suggests that, in the relationship between midwives and childbearing people, patients deeply value time together, trust, the ability to ask questions, and emotional support.²¹ To actualize these values, it is essential for midwives to be able to practice *autonomously*. Professional autonomy means midwives practice as independent providers that do not require physician “supervision.” To date, many state laws persistently require physician supervision and/or contractual practice agreements with physicians, ranging from supervision for all practice to supervision for prescriptive authority. States with laws that ensure autonomous midwifery practice have a more robust midwifery workforce that can attend more births and achieve better outcomes.²²

Current hospital bylaws and other regulatory and legislative restrictions limit the growth of a robust midwifery workforce. Perinatal equity requires removing archaic laws and outdated policies designed to restrict midwifery practice and consolidate the power of physicians and hospital-based care.”

<https://www.commonwealthfund.org/publications/issue-briefs/2023/may/expanding-role-midwives-address-maternal-health-crisis>

Removing the board of direct entry midwives is the first step in allowing more regulation and less autonomy of midwifery care in Alaska. Please protect midwifery care in Alaska and oppose executive order #130 and support house bill #175

Mikaela Levy

Mendenhall valley resident - Juneau, Alaska

I would like to again express my concern about EO 130 and encourage every member of the committee to consider carefully the downstream consequences of the administration disbanding a freestanding, self sufficient board of professional peers made up of autonomous healthcare providers.

Please note I am a licensed midwife, practicing in Wasilla.

The families I serve have ALL expressed to me that they oppose the uncertainty of the future of midwifery that this executive order presents.

Mary Yanagawa

I strongly oppose executive order 130, and hope that you will as well.

Thank you, Jacquelyn Carmen, Wasilla AK

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Hello,

Please hear our voice as we write in support of maintaining the Board of Midwives in Alaska. We are **OPPOSED** to the governors Executive Order 130 that would absorb this autonomous board into the Department of Commerce.

We would also ask that you vote YES on HB 175 this session as it makes its way through the committee process and ultimately will be voted on by the whole body.

We want to continue Alaska's strong history of access to midwifery care and protecting the autonomy of this profession and the women who have the right to choose how and where to give birth.

Thank you for your time,

Shawna M. Dziedziak

Doula

Wasilla, AK

I am a Certified Direct Entry Midwife and have practiced as such in Alaska for 23 years. I sat on the licensing board for 7 years and was Chair of the board for 4 of those years. I own my own practice and a Birth Center in Palmer. I am vehemently opposed to the Executive Order 130 to eliminate our board. I understand the Governor's point of view, however, this board is unique in that what we do as a profession is unique to us. Neither doctors nor nurses can regulate our profession because they have no idea what our scope of practice is. Also, they are in direct competition with us and many have opposed us due to their financial gain from limiting us. We save the state millions of dollars by helping hundreds of women be healthier and have low risk and low intervention births. We have an incredibly high rate of breast feeding by 6 months, which is known to be protective of infant and child health.

The majority of midwives in this state are against losing our board. Our greatest concerns are:

- Who will ensure that we continue to get reimbursed by Medicaid so that Alaskan women have choices in healthcare? It actually states in our Alaska Medicaid handbook that we must be "licensed by a board" in order to receive reimbursement. Because there are "only 43 of us" it would be so easy for a bureaucrat to take that away from us (women and midwives).

- If we lose Medicaid, it's a slippery slope towards losing the ability to be in network with private insurance companies and having professional liability insurance, which then leads to not being able to bill insurance at all.

- Who will "regulate" us? If it's not midwives who understand true public safety in this arena, anyone else trying this task could put the public in danger or limit our scope of practice.

We have fought so long and so hard to have a board and keep it functioning well. We ARE fiscally responsible. Our fees are very high but we have been happy to pay them in order to retain a board. We are unique from the Nursing board or Doctor board in that our board actually is protective of midwives for receiving reimbursement.

Please vote NO on this order. At the very least, could you put into the order a paragraph which stipulates that we must be reimbursed by Medicaid and Insurance to protect our trade in the coming years?

Thank You,

Holly Steiner, RN, CDM

New Life Midwifery and Birth Center

342 S. Alaska St. Palmer, AK 99645

I SUPPORT Midwifery in Alaska and OPPOSE EO No130.

Respectfully,

Amy Reedy, CDM, CPM

My name is Rebecca Hunter and, as a mother of three small children, I support midwifery in Alaska and emphatically oppose executive order No. 130.

Midwives have safely helped women navigate child birth for centuries and to limit the access to safe, holistic health care providers by way of this EO is absolutely appalling. I am sure many other Alaskan mothers feel similarly. The midwives I have known through the years and throughout my pregnancies have been phenomenal resources and helped me emotionally and physically with my pregnancies and births. Without them my birthing experiences would have been absolutely dreadful. We need midwives and midwives need to be involved in the decision making process, to exclude them is absolutely unacceptable.

I hope the leadership handling this issue will understand the value of having midwives involved and will oppose this executive order as well.

Thank you,
Rebecca Hunter