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BIRTHNET OF THE FINGER LAKES SUPPORTS THE MIDWIFERY MODERNIZATION ACT

BirthNet of the Finger Lakes – Consumers Supporting Birth Options

BirthNet of the Finger Lakes is a consumer run organization providing education and information to women and families regarding choices in maternity care. We also work to maintain a full range of maternity care options for women in our community. Our more than 160 members are both consumers and birth care professionals.

Midwifery Care – Safe, Evidence-Based Care for Mothers and Babies

Research shows that a midwifery approach to pregnancy and childbirth emphasizes wellness and normality. Midwives offer a highly individualized, low-intervention, evidence-based style of care for low-risk healthy women. Empirical research consistently supports excellent outcomes for midwifery care both in terms of physical well-being of mother and baby, and satisfaction with care. This style of care is not only safe and effective, it is also associated with lower costs than conventional obstetrical care.

Midwives collaborate, as necessary, with many different types of physicians (e.g., obstetricians, endocrinologists, pediatricians) with whom they have collegial relations. They very rarely have written collaborative agreements with these physicians – they simply refer their clients to see the doctors and the doctors agree to see them. This system works quite well without the requirement of a written agreement.

The Written Practice Agreement in New York State Limits Midwifery Care

While the spirit of the written practice agreement (WPA) requirement may seem like it inspires collaboration between midwives and physicians, in fact, this is not the case. Although many doctors are willing to collaborate with midwives, they are unwilling or unable to sign these agreements. Therefore, although midwives are trained as independent health care professionals, this requirement in the law prohibits them from being able to practice independently. The WPA represents an enormous barrier to practice for midwives all over NYS.

Expanding Health Care Options for Rural Women

Importantly, when midwives cannot practice, women and families are denied access to optimal care. The WPA limits access to midwifery care to many women in communities across NYS, and often in underserved areas where this type of care is sorely needed. In many rural areas of the state there are no hospitals or obstetric providers to sign practice agreements. Removal of the WPA requirement would allow midwives to practice in areas where women currently have to travel very far to receive care.

BirthNet of the Finger Lakes supports the Midwifery Modernization Act (Senate Bill S5007/Assembly Bill A8117) with the highest degree of enthusiasm. Removing the requirement of a written practice agreement for midwives in New York State will enable access to safe, evidence-based, individualized midwifery care for women all across New York.

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