

National Organization for Women – New York City



June 14, 2010

Assembly Member Amy Paulin
Legislative Office Building 627
Albany, New York 12218

Re: Support of Midwifery Modernization Act (A8117/S5007)

Dear Assembly Member Paulin:

As the United States' largest feminist organization, the National Organization for Women has historically been on the front lines, advocating for women's access to safe and legal reproductive healthcare services. For this reason, the National Organization for Women of New York City strongly supports the passage of the Midwifery Modernization Act (A8117/S5007), which will ensure that women of New York State will continue to have access to the Midwives Model of Care.

The Midwifery Modernization Act will eliminate the requirement of a Written Practice Agreement (WPA) between licensed midwives and physicians as a prerequisite for practice, but will by no means change the professional, collaborative relationship among midwives, physicians and other health care providers, with whom a WPA is not required.

Licensed midwives typically serve individuals of underrepresented communities who do not readily have access to affordable healthcare. The removal of the Written Practice Agreement will enhance the availability of reproductive health services particularly in New York State's rural and low-income urban communities where inequality in healthcare access is most evident.

The recent closing of St. Vincent's Hospital in Manhattan, which served 500 to 600 women, resulted in the loss of over 20 midwives. In communities where doctors choose not to or are unable to sign WPAs, women are denied access to the expertise that midwives provide, as well as the agency to choose how they want to be cared for during and after their pregnancy.

Removal of the Written Practice Agreement will improve and increase access to midwifery, a model of maternity care that has proven to result in low risk pregnancies, as it significantly reduces the rate of cesarean section, neonatal mortality, and low birth weight when compared to conventional forms of obstetrical care. The removal of the Written Practice Agreement enhances a woman's options when seeking quality healthcare services during pregnancy, birth, postpartum and for routine gynecological care, all of which licensed midwives provide.

As the founding chapter of the National Organization for Women, NOW-NYC has supported a woman's right to decide on her own reproductive health care, and the passage of the Midwifery Modernization Act is critical piece of legislation that will ensure the freedom of choice for all women. Uninhibited access to the services of a licensed midwife is a woman's reproductive right.

Sincerely,

Sonia Ossorio, Executive Director of NOW-NYC