



NEWS RELEASE

For Immediate Release
February 9, 2007

Contact: Rebecca Jacob
Direct Line: (240) 485-1822
Email: rjacob@acnm.org
Web site: www.midwife.org

MIDWIVES APPLAUD INTRODUCTION OF MEDICARE EQUITY LEGISLATION

Silver Spring, MD – The American College of Nurse-Midwives (ACNM), the nation’s oldest women’s health organization, applauds Senator Kent Conrad (D-ND), Senator Susan Collins (R-ME), Senator Maria Cantwell (D-WA) and Senator Richard Durbin (D-IL), Rep. Ed Towns (D-NY) and Rep. Fred Upton (R-MI) on the bipartisan introduction of their legislation, the “Midwifery Care Access and Reimbursement Equity Act of 2007,” (S.507/H.R.864). This legislation will improve access for Medicare beneficiaries to the vital obstetrical and gynecological services offered by certified nurse-midwives (CNM) and certified midwives (CM).

“Providing equitable reimbursement for the high quality primary care services of certified nurse-midwives and certified midwives will aid in ensuring that midwifery services are available to women in need,” said Katherine Camacho Carr, CNM, PhD, president of the ACNM. “ACNM thanks the sponsors of these bills for their leadership and longstanding support of midwifery care.”

Certified nurse-midwives and certified midwives are highly educated health care professionals; midwives complete a post-baccalaureate education program, pass a national certification examination and obtain state licensure to practice in the United States. In 2004, certified nurse-midwives attended more than 300,000 deliveries; 98% of midwife-attended deliveries occur in a hospital setting.

Since 1988, the Medicare program has authorized midwifery care to address the maternity needs of disabled women of childbearing age who qualify for coverage. In 1993, Congress authorized midwives to also provide additional services outside the maternity cycle for all women under Medicare.

In a June 2002 report to Congress, the Medicare Payment Advisory Commission (MedPAC) unanimously recommended that the percentage of part B reimbursement for certified nurse-midwife services be increased by Congress. MedPAC also highlighted the high quality of care provided by certified nurse-midwives.

While most states reimburse midwives at the same rate as other obstetrical and gynecological providers under Medicaid, a 35% disparity in reimbursement exists within the Medicare program. This payment inequity is a barrier to women’s access and choice of provider within the program.

Health disparities in the U.S. continue to be a critical problem. Midwives have historically cared for those populations most at risk for health disparities in areas of high infant mortality, preterm birth, low birth weight, sudden infant death syndrome, maternal mortality, breast and cervical cancer, and HIV/AIDS infection among women. Medicare reimbursement equity for midwives would help assure

access to primary care services for disabled and vulnerable women.

For more information on the new legislation, or on midwives and midwifery in America, visit www.midwife.org.

###

For more information, please contact Rebecca Jacob, ACNM Communications Manager at (240) 485-1822 or via email at rjacob@acnm.org.

With roots dating to 1929, the American College of Nurse-Midwives is the oldest women's health care association in the U.S. ACNM's mission is to promote the health and well-being of women and newborns within their families and communities through the development and support of the profession of midwifery as practiced by certified nurse-midwives and certified midwives. Midwives believe every individual has the right to safe, satisfying health care with respect for human dignity and cultural variations. More information about ACNM can be found at www.midwife.org.

8403 Colesville Road, Ste. 1550, Silver Spring, MD 20910-6374 • Phone: (240) 485-1800 • Fax: (240) 485-1818 • www.midwife.org