



NEWS RELEASE

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Midwives Applaud Legislation to Improve Birth Outcomes Utilizing Best Evidence

SILVER SPRING, MD – The American College of Nurse-Midwives (ACNM), the oldest women’s health organization in the country, applauds Rep. Lucille Roybal-Allard (D-CA) for introducing the “Maximizing Optimal Maternity Services for the 21st Century Act of 2010 (MOMS 21)” (H.R.5807). The purpose of this legislation is to improve maternal health outcomes in the United States by harnessing the best evidence in maternity care delivery.

“As we implement health care reform over the coming years, it is imperative that clinicians, researchers, and policymakers work together to improve the quality of health care while also lowering costs,” asserts ACNM President Holly Kennedy, PhD., CNM, FACNM, FAAN. “We have clearly identified the most important evidence-based practices that result in a healthy mother and baby by reducing complications and unnecessary interventions in childbirth. These practices generally are also more cost-effective, but there are obstacles blocking their adoption. We commend Rep. Roybal-Allard for making improved maternal health in the U.S. a high priority and for introducing legislation with a defining, unifying principle of support for evidence-based practice.”

Alarming trends in maternal and newborn health in recent years are the driving force behind this legislation. The United States per capita health expenditures are double those of other developed countries, and combined charges for maternal and newborn care by far exceed those of all other health care conditions. Despite this high level of spending, our nation ranks far behind almost all developed countries in key perinatal health indicators. There is a growing shortage of maternity care providers and facilities in many areas of the country, particularly in rural areas and inner cities. There are significant racial and ethnic disparities in maternity care outcomes and a lack of diversity in the maternity care workforce, which has created additional barriers to women’s ability to access culturally and linguistically competent maternity services.

The MOMS 21 bill would:

- Create a national focus on maternity services by establishing an interagency coordinating committee to promote optimal maternity care by all federal agencies involved with the delivery of health services.
- Expand federal research on best maternity practices by establishing a Center for Excellence on Optimal Maternity Outcomes and directing the Center for Innovation within the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services to focus additional research on cost-effective, high-quality maternity care models
- Develop a comprehensive online database for consumers and health care providers containing up-to-date systematic reviews of maternal and newborn care practices
- Authorize a national consumer education campaign to inform women about evidence-based maternity care practices

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- Support the education of a more culturally diverse interdisciplinary maternity care workforce with the establishment of targeted federal grant programs and an aggressive educational loan repayment program focused on maternity care shortage areas

“Certified nurse-midwives (CNMs) and certified midwives (CMs) are leading experts in evidence-based maternity care practices associated with excellent maternal and infant outcomes,” said ACNM Executive Director Lorrie Kline Kaplan. “ACNM is working with federal policymakers to increase the number of skilled midwives and increase access to midwifery care in the U.S. Leading international organizations have also recently issued a united call to increase the number of skilled midwives as the most important policy solution for improving maternal and infant outcomes worldwide.”

The number of midwife-attended births in the U.S. has doubled since 1991, primarily occurring in hospitals, as well as freestanding birth centers and homes. In addition to maternity care, CNMs and CMs also provide primary care, family planning, and gynecology services for women from adolescence through menopause.

Kennedy adds, “ACNM is pleased to support the MOMS 21 bill and invites consumers and other health professionals to work with us to champion improvements in maternal and newborn health as a high priority in the United States.”

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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.

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