

February 28, 2009

To: Illinois General Assembly

Re: **Home Birth Safety Act (HB 226)**

Dear Honorable Members of the Illinois Legislature:

Thank you for taking the time to consider my letter in support of HB 226 and the wonderful work done by Certified Professional Midwives. I am an American Board of Ob/Gyn certified, Fellow of the American College of On/Gyn, practicing obstetrician in Ventura County, California. I have collaborated with, supported, supervised and observed the work of midwives for more than 25 years. I founded The Woman's Place, Inc. in Camarillo California in 1995. This is a collaborative practice between doctors and midwives where last year our primary c/section rate was 4.8%. This compares to a 19% primary rate for the other, doctor only, practices in my community and a nationwide overall c/section rate near 31%. I tell you this to give you insight into my background, experience and expertise in assessing the skill, nurturing and wonderful dedication to the well-being of women exhibited by Certified Professional Midwives.

I have been informed by my midwife colleagues that many individual doctors have been traveling to Springfield to lobby against HB 226. I suspect most, if not all of them, have never worked with midwives on a regular basis. While I cannot testify to the motives of doctors speaking out against midwives, I do suspect it has to do with personal economics more than anything else. I can state categorically that it is not a safety issue. All the literature on evidenced based and outcomes based medicine supports the midwifery model of care. Their protocols restrict them to low risk patients and they are well trained to recognize problems that may arise. From patient satisfaction surveys, to fewer NICU admissions to lower intervention, operative delivery and birth trauma data there can be no doubt of the benefits of the Midwifery Model of Obstetrics.

Pregnancy is not a disease. It is a natural function of a woman's body and deserves to be nurtured. No one does this better than midwives. The American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists has as one of its tenets the right of a patient to informed consent and informed refusal. The choice of how and where to birth should be left to the honestly informed patient and her family. Removing the option of midwifery would be a denial of that basic human right to self-determination. While many would still choose to birth with a physician in a hospital, we should honor and respect a woman's choice to follow her own path. As a physician with the expertise to back up my position, I strongly urge you to vote in favor of HB 226.

Most Sincerely,

Stuart J. Fischbein, MD FACOG