

Illinois State Medical Society



MEMORANDUM

TO: Honorable Members of the Illinois General Assembly

FROM: James E. Tierney, Vice President
Robert John Kane, Legal Counsel
Alison A. Burnett, Assistant Vice President
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RE: Opposition to Community Midwives – HB 1665

DATE: March 16, 2011

The 12,000 members of the Illinois State Medical Society respectively request your “NO” vote on HB 1665, which allows “community midwives” to provide obstetrical care at the home by preventing emergency personnel and facilities from reporting them to the appropriate state agencies for practicing medicine without a license.

HB 1665 would require Illinois hospitals to develop transfer protocols for patients delivering babies at home when emergencies arise and medical intervention is required.

Physicians oppose legislative efforts that allow for “community midwives” or “certified professional midwives” because the practice of delivering at home with undertrained individuals potentially puts the mother and the newborn in danger. Creating laws that allow for this type of practice sends a message to the public that it is safe and we believe the exact opposite to be true.

Recent studies comparing low risk home births to low risk hospital births show that babies born at home have an elevated risk of death compared to those in hospitals. In 1959, the last year midwifery was legal in Missouri, the infant death rate was 3.31 times higher than it was in 2006. This is clearly a result of the advancement of medicine, not in advancement in midwifery.

The bill fails to hold “community midwives” to ANY education and training standards. Midwives do not have hospital admitting privileges nor do they do have the education and training to make medical diagnoses and keep medical records. They are not prepared to deal with emergencies, which is made evident by the introduction of this bill and HCA 1.

Requiring protocols for emergency transport presents a false promise to women. Avoiding the emergency by encouraging mothers to seek out medical care from the beginning of their pregnancy is best way to protect their safety and the safety of their baby.

Substituting under-trained, unsupervised individuals for physicians and advanced practice nurses greatly increases the risks to the mother and infant.

We urge your “NO” vote on HB 1665.