

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
Erin O'Brien, Assistant Vice President

RE: Opposition to Licensure of Midwives – (HB 1194, HB 2685, HB3636)

DATE: February 18, 2014

The physicians of the Illinois State Medical Society respectfully request your “NO” vote on bills (HB 1194, HB2685, and HB3636), which would license individuals who receive little to no medical training to provide unsupervised home birthing services.

The Illinois General Assembly has a strong record in protecting patient safety and promoting the highest quality of care by requiring health care professionals to meet rigorous licensure standards. **HB 2685 is a step backward in this effort as it would allow the least trained individual to *independently* provide one of the most critical services to women in Illinois.**

These bills would license direct entry midwives as “certified professional midwives” (CPMs). These midwives are significantly different from certified nurse midwives. CPMs do not consider obstetrical care to be medical care, yet their legislation would allow them to perform histories and physicals, provide prenatal care, dispense drugs, treat hemorrhages and other emergencies, and treat the infant and woman postpartum. All of these activities are medical in nature and should only be performed by the professionals who are adequately trained to do so.

The advocates accuse ISMS and thus Illinois physicians of refusing to enter into supervisory agreements with direct entry midwives. To be clear, Illinois physicians believe allowing non-medically trained individuals to provide medical care is unsafe for Illinois patients and licensing non-medically trained individuals as medical professionals sets a dangerous precedent.

ISMS supports the collaborative relationship that currently exists between physicians and certified nurse midwives, but is strongly opposed to the licensure of “certified professional midwives.” The education requirements for nurse midwives, which far exceed those required of certified midwives, protect patient safety and the collaborative relationships that exist between physician and advanced practice nurses provides the patient with the security and knowledge that a well-trained team is caring her and her newborn and can handle emergencies in a timely and appropriate manner should they arise.

The advocates, to date, have only said that increasing their MEDICAL education and training is not necessary.

Would the General Assembly support legislation lowering the standards for a licensed obstetrician and gynecologist? Of course not, but passing this bill is comparable to doing just that.

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 HBs 1194, 2685 and 3636.