

March 18, 2020

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The Honorable Steven Glazer
Chair, Senate Business, Professions, and Economic Development Committee
State Capitol, Room 2053
Sacramento, CA 95814

RE: Senate Bill 1237 (Dodd, Burke) – Support

Dear Senator Glazer,

On behalf of the California Women's Law Center (CWLC), we write in support of SB 1237, the Justice and Equity in Maternity Care Act. SB 1237 would increase access to high-value, high-quality maternal healthcare and improve maternal and newborn health outcomes during a time when California faces a critical obstetrician shortage and significant race-based disparities in maternal and infant outcomes.

At least 9 California counties do not have an obstetrical provider. Large counties in Northern and Southern California are projected to have critical shortages of maternal healthcare providers by 2025. Certified Nurse-midwives (CNM) are experienced women's health practitioners who are already filling this shortage gap. Midwifery care decreases the rates of cesarean births, severe perineal trauma, severe blood loss, preterm births, newborns with low birth weight, and newborn admissions to neonatal intensive care units.

California is 1 of only 4 states to still require physician supervision of nurse-midwives. The current physician supervision rule creates many barriers to care. It tethers CNMs geographically and economically to where obstetricians already practice. This worsens the maldistribution of maternal healthcare providers in areas where the most vulnerable populations already lack access to care, and during a time when we have large disparities in birthing outcomes. SB 1237 would address these issues by updating the current rule and allowing California to join 46 other states in creating innovative strategies to improve maternal and newborn well-being.

CWLC's mission is to break down barriers and advance the potential of women and girls through transformative litigation, policy advocacy, and education. We prioritize women's health and work to ensure that women in California have access to high-quality, comprehensive healthcare, including maternal healthcare, regardless of their gender, race, income, or geography.

For these reasons, the California Women's Law Center supports SB 1237.

Sincerely,



Betsy Butler
Executive Director

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