

**I am a mother first.
I will protect my baby.
I demand access to safe choices for birth.**

Women have the human and legal right to give birth at home.

We will continue to give birth at home.

We demand the right to have competent care of our choice where we give birth.

We demand that Delaware stops targeting our only support for safe, out-of-hospital options for birth. We demand that the state stops using precious resources to penalize us and our babies, to put us in danger by restricting our access to safe care, and to use us as political fodder for their anti-change, anti-progress, anti-family stance.

We demand access to nurse AND non-nurse midwives.

Current medical evidence shows homebirth to be as safe or safer than hospital birth when appropriately supported¹. “Planned home birth attended by a registered midwife was associated with very low and comparable rates of perinatal death and reduced rates of obstetric interventions and other adverse perinatal outcomes compared with planned hospital birth attended by a midwife or physician.” In these situations, the attending non-nurse midwives are properly trained, skilled and experienced; and there is a continuity of care and individualized assessments to identify if someone is not a good candidate for home birth. Moreover, women should expect seamless transfers to the hospital in the rare case a complication occurs, where their midwives can remain with them in continuity of care without fear of reprisal from the hospital or law.

Targeting midwives who support women in their choice to give birth where they wish makes birth less safe for moms and babies. A system that forces our care providers underground and obscures transparency inhibits continuity of care and the ability to make a smooth transfer to the hospital, if an emergency transfer is needed. These things jeopardize the safety of women and their children.

The best maternity care in the world features respectful collaboration among midwives, doctors, and hospital staff². We should be working toward that—not using state resources to restrict women’s rights in birth, endanger the lives of mothers and babies, and wrongfully criminalize women who support other women in their lawful action of giving birth where they choose.

In order to increase our access to midwifery-care, we demand that Delaware amends Delaware Code Title 16, 4106 Practice of Non-Nurse Midwifery, Section 4.3, which bars professional, non-nurse midwives from becoming licensed within our state as it is impossible for them to obtain full collaborative agreements with a Delaware licensed physician with obstetrical hospital privileges due to insurance barriers. Without this requirement, our midwives and doctors could still work together to offer the best care possible for our families.

We demand access to safe choices for birth.

Current Delaware Statistics which could drastically improve with better access to midwives:

- Delaware ranks 19th with a cesarean rate of 33.9% which is higher than the national average³.
- Only 8.9% of laboring women in Delaware who had a previous cesarean delivery birthed their next child vaginally in 2010, compared to 16.5% in 2000⁴.
- In Delaware, 19.6% of breastfed infants received formula before 2 days of age⁵.

Footnotes:

1. CMAJ: Outcomes of planned home birth with registered midwife versus planned hospital birth with midwife or physician. September 15, 2009 vol. 181 no. 6-7, <http://www.cmaj.ca/content/181/6-7/377.full>
2. CMAJ: Effect of a collaborative interdisciplinary maternity care program on perinatal outcomes. November 20, 2012 vol. 184 no. 17, <http://www.cmaj.ca/content/184/17/1885.short>
3. CesareanRates.com: Delaware Cesarean Rates, Pub. Jan. 15, 2013
http://www.cesareanrates.com/storage/state_pdfs/Delaware_Cesarean_Rates_Report.pdf
4. National Center for Health Statistics: final natality data. Retrieved May 18th, 2013, from www.marchofdimes.com/peristats.
5. CDC: 2012 Breastfeeding Report Card – United States.
<http://www.cdc.gov/breastfeeding/data/reportcard.htm>

Other Resources:

- Johnson & Daviss, BMJ 2005, Outcomes of planned homebirths with certified professional midwives: large prospective study in North America, <http://www.bmj.com/content/330/7505/1416>
- Amnesty International, 2011, Deadly Delivery: The maternal health care crisis in the USA, <http://www.amnestyusa.org/sites/default/files/deadlydeliveryoneyear.pdf>
- Welsh, Today.com, 2011, C-Section rates hits all-time high, study finds, http://www.today.com/id/43807114/site/todayshow/ns/today-today_health/t/c-section-rates-hit-all-time-high-study-finds/#.UPlhgWfiWCo
- Delaware Code Title 16, 4106 Practice of Non-Nurse Midwifery, Section 4.3, <http://regulations.delaware.gov/AdminCode/title16/Department%20of%20Health%20and%20Social%20Services/Division%20of%20Public%20Health/Family%20Health%20Services/4106.shtml>