



MISSOURI SENATE

JEFFERSON CITY

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PRESS RELEASE

Midwifery Legislation Advances in Missouri Senate

Cauthorn's Bill Legalizes Trade, Ensures Safety of Mother, Baby

JEFFERSON CITY, MO – Expecting mothers wishing to use the services of a midwife during home birth are one step closer today. Senate committee members voted 6-3 endorsing Sen. John Cauthorn's SB 637, which legalizes midwifery and creates a licensing board for midwives.

"My bill does two things. First, it legalizes the practice of midwifery. Trained, competent professionals should not be afraid of jail time for delivering a baby," said Cauthorn. "Second, it ensures the safety of the mother and baby by establishing criteria to become a licensed midwife in Missouri."

Cauthorn's bill creates a Board of Direct-Entry Midwives with the power to license midwives, and to suspend, revoke or deny licenses. The board is composed of certified midwives, physicians, and a public member.

A direct-entry midwife must be certified by the North American Registry of Midwives (NARM) which requires education and testing. They provide care of women and infants before, during and six weeks after birth. Midwives must detail their level of experience, their insurance, and an emergency medical plan to the mother.

Midwives cannot prescribe medications or drugs. They cannot perform medical inductions or caesarean sections.

"Midwives' level of training and education under this bill is tremendous," said Cauthorn. "Further, the attention they provide to a mother, the personal experience, and affordability are major pluses."

In 2000, *The British Medical Journal* studied midwifery in the United States and Canada. Participation in the study was a mandatory requirement for midwives seeking NARM re-certification. The Journal studied 409 practicing midwives and their 5,418 clients. They found:

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Midwives

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- Of those women, 655 (12.1%) were transferred to a hospital
- 1.7 neonatal deaths per 1000 patients, similar to other studies of low risk home and hospital births in North America
- Study concluded “planned home birth for low risk women in North America using certified professional midwives was associated with lower rates of medical intervention but similar intrapartum and neonatal mortality to that of low risk hospital birth in the U.S.”

“This bill brings professionalism and accountability to the trade, ensures the utmost safety of the mother and baby, and most importantly, lets midwives deliver babies for mothers wanting home birth,” said Cauthorn.

The legislation now moves to the Senate floor where it will be debated by the full body.

Sen. Cauthorn represents Missouri’s 18th Senate District. He can be reached at his capitol office at (573) 751-6858. You can also visit his web page by going to www.senate.mo.gov/cauthorn.

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Editor’s Note:

Debbie Smithey, Missouri Midwives Association president, can be reached at 660-598-2225

On the web:

http://www.senate.mo.gov/06info/bts_web/Bill.aspx?SessionType=R&BillID=77

British Medical Journal Study:

<http://bmj.bmjournals.com/cgi/content/full/330/7505/1416?ehom>