April 9, 2020

Governor Gretchen Whitmer
Romney Building
PO Box 30013
Lansing, MI  48909

RE: Licensed Midwives to be Authorized Medicaid Providers

Dear Governor Whitmer:

I am writing today as chair of the House Health Policy Committee. We are all concerned with the impact the COVID-19 virus has made on residents in Michigan, and together we have looked at best practices from other states as well as recommendations received from experts in the medical field who call Michigan their home. Thirty-five states, including Michigan, have licensed certified professional midwives. Of these states, fifteen accept them as Medicaid providers.

During the past weeks it has been brought to my attention that expectant mothers and their families have been looking at alternative birthing opportunities outside of traditional hospital facilities. Licensed Midwives (LMs) have been receiving additional requests from families to deliver their babies; due to the concerns with the ongoing virus. Currently Michigan does not accept LMs as Medicaid providers. This is likely due to their licensure being relatively new with LARA finalizing the administrative rules and issuing licenses as of Spring 2019.

There are several reasons LMs should have this authorization:

1. LMs provide out-of-hospital prenatal, intrapartum and postpartum care to healthy pregnant patients which will free up hospital beds and personnel for COVID patients.
2. Out of hospital care will reduce pregnant patients’ exposure to COVID-19.
3. Out of hospital care minimizes travel time for pregnant patients, enabling them to comply with social distancing practices in order to avoid becoming potential carriers.
4. Reluctance from pregnant women and their families is evident as Licensed Midwives are receiving additional requests to deliver babies for the next several months. It is imperative that we match these women up with educated, skilled attendants.
I am asking today that you consider issuing an executive order to extend Medicaid coverage status to Michigan’s Licensed Midwives. During this time, while we are attempting to maintain safe and healthy environments for our citizens, women of all income levels should have access to LMs. As you know, some of the most populated areas in our state have large numbers of COVID19 positive tests. LM’s can be a safe alternate for mothers on Medicaid. They are ready and willing to assist families during an important time and event in their life.

Thank you for your consideration of this request. I am available to discuss any questions or concerns at your convenience. My cell phone is (517) 648-0321.

Respectfully,

Hank Vaupel
State Representative – 47th District