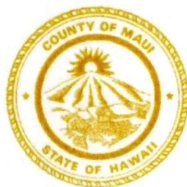


**RICHARD T. BISSEN, JR.**  
Mayor

**JOSIAH K. NISHITA**  
Managing Director



**COUNTY OF MAUI  
COMMITTEE ON THE STATUS  
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January 16, 2024

Hawaii State Legislature  
Hawai'i State Capitol  
415 South Beretania St.  
Honolulu, HI 96813

**STATEMENT OF SUPPORT FROM THE MAUI COUNTY  
COMMITTEE ON THE STATUS OF WOMEN**

Support for Amendments to Act 32, HRS 457-J

The Maui County Committee on the Status of Women ("MCCSW") is a seven-member volunteer group of mayoral appointees that advocates for social justice, educates women on their rights, educates women to vote, engages in political processes, gathers information on women's issues, promotes women's equality, and serves as a resource for women through programming, public education, and citizen participation.

Over the course of the last two years, the MCCSW has received testimony and presentations relating to Act 32, signed into law on April 30, 2019 and titled "Relating to the Licensure of Midwives." During the 2021 legislative session, the MCCSW transmitted two letters in support of proposed amendments to Act 32. Copies of these letters are enclosed here for reference.

The MCCSW understands that by establishing a mandatory regulatory process for the midwifery procession, the bill intended to protect the health and safety of mothers and newborns. The MCCSW does not wish to diminish the importance of such safety or the intentions of the bill and recognizes the physical and emotional vulnerabilities pregnant women, new mothers, and newborns

face. However, based on the information the Committee has received and considered, the MCCSW also recognizes that as written, Act 32 has the capacity to cause substantial harm to midwifery practices in Hawai'i and may ultimately lead to a significant decrease in both the access to quality midwifery care as well as a cessation in cultural traditional practices significant to kānaka maoli.

During the MCCSW meeting on October 17, 2023 and November 15, 2022, the Committee received testimony from fourteen women, including established midwives, naturopaths, mothers, women training to become midwives, and a prospective future midwife. The testimony conveyed a demand for midwifery services in the community; regarding both enabling pregnant women to have access to holistic care to meet their needs and reduce needs for labor interventions, and preserving indigenous cultural practices and traditions. One testifier shared that she experienced two different but consistently traumatic birth experiences in hospital settings on Maui and Oahu and how access to midwifery care may have enabled different outcomes. Several testifiers shared their experience and training in midwifery practices, reporting that while there may be different paths to training to be considered a midwife in the community, that supporting the health and safety of mothers and newborns is paramount to their careers and is something midwives are well-equipped to do. Another testifier shared her efforts to obtain licensure adequate to meet the requirements of Act 32, noting that there are no programs in Hawaii that meet these requirements and she must travel regularly to the mainland as she moves through the program.

There is vast qualitative and quantitative data available that demonstrates the impacts of reducing health care opportunities and access, including but not limited to increasing financial costs to individual patients and increasing burdens on other medical practitioners who may already be limited in capacity. Examples specific to Maui County include the reality that pregnant women living on Moloka'i or Lāna'i must make arrangements to relocate to Oahu or Maui a month before their anticipated due dates due to a lack of birthing facilities on those islands, and that there are only an estimated two medical clinics on Maui as of October, 2023 with the cessation of Perinatal services previously offered by Maui Lani Physician and Surgeons as well as the recent destruction of West Maui Kaiser Medical facilities offering prenatal and postpartum support. Women in West and East Maui rural communities must commute over an hour to receive limited services even after giving birth. Many pregnant women seek temporary housing in central Maui rather than risk birthing in Hana or Honoapi'ilani Hwy, which is common, and to avoid having to return to town for early postpartum checkups.

The MCCSW strongly believes that birthing people in Maui County and across Hawaii deserve access to high quality, culturally sensitive birth and postpartum services in their own communities. and that it is their right to choose which services best meet their needs for a safe and meaningful delivery. The

MCCSW also believes that, especially those who have established long term careers, deserve access to an attainable pathway for certification and regulation to be able to continue their practices and the cultural traditions of our native host culture.

The MCCSW respectfully asks our State legislators to consider the needs of our people, both those receiving care from midwives and those providing care, to work with industry experts available across Hawaii, and to explore possible amendments that would enable the preservation of midwifery in Hawaii while also maintaining the protection of safety as the original bill intended.

Thank you very much for the opportunity to provide this testimony.

Sincerely,

*Kelii P. Naho'oikaika*

KELII PILI ALOHA NAHO'OIKAIKA  
Chair  
Committee on the Status of Women

cc:

Richard T. Bissen, Jr., Mayor  
Alice L. Lee, Chair Maui County Council  
Members of the Maui County Council  
Executive Director Hawaii State Commission on the Status of Women  
Stacey Moniz, Hawaii State Commission on the Status of Women (Maui)  
Lynn DeCoite, Senator District 7, County of Maui  
Troy Hashimoto, Senator District 5, County of Maui  
Terez Amato, Representative District 11, County of Maui  
Elle Cochran, Representative District 14, County of Maui  
Natalia Hussey-Burdick, Representative District 50, County of Honolulu  
Tyson Miyake, Representative District 10, County of Maui  
Mahina Poepoe, Representative District 13, County of Maui  
Trustee Carmen "Hulu" Lindsey, Chair Board of Trustee OHA (Maui)  
Cory Lynn Vicens, Boards and Commissions Liaison