

\$2.5 Million to Educate Disadvantaged Student Midwives Becomes Law

On Thursday, December 19th, following a vote in the U.S. House of Representatives earlier in the week, the Senate passed the *Further Consolidated Appropriations Act of 2020* which includes funding for the Department of Health and Human Services through next September. NACPM and the Midwifery Education Accreditation Council (MEAC) are thrilled to announce that funding to educate midwives that was included this past summer in the House appropriations bill, is part of this final legislation. The President signed this Act last evening, December 20th.

This legislation allocates **\$2,500,000 to educate midwives within the Scholarships for Disadvantaged Students (SDS) Program in Title VII of the Public Health Service Act**. For the first time ever, midwives enrolled in accredited programs will be included in the categories of students eligible to receive SDS scholarships. This funding within the SDS program will increase the number of midwifery graduates working in underserved communities and those from disadvantaged backgrounds, including students who are members of racial and ethnic minority groups.

"A midwifery workforce that represents the changing racial and ethnic demographics of the childbearing population is urgently needed to address the mortality and morbidity crisis for birthing people in the U.S. today," said Mary Lawlor, Executive Director of NACPM. "We know that communities of color tragically suffer these outcomes disproportionately and that concordant care – where people see themselves as similar to their care provider - contributes to better outcomes in vulnerable populations. NACPM celebrates this new funding as a positive step forward toward a representative midwifery workforce and better health for all people having babies."



Rep. Herrera Beutler (R-WA)



Rep. Roybal-Allard (D-CA)

NACPM and MEAC are committed to investing in a strong, racially, ethnically and socially representative CPM workforce to meet the urgent needs of childbearing people. We applaud Congress for prioritizing for the first time the growth of the midwifery workforce. We especially thank Congresswoman Lucille Roybal-Allard (D-CA), Chair of the Maternity Care

Caucus, and Congresswoman Jamie Herrera Beutler (R-WA), Co-Chair of the Caucus, for supporting the critical role midwives must play in alleviating the birth care crisis. We thank them first for including this funding in the House appropriations legislation this past summer, and for ensuring that it remained intact in the final legislation. We are grateful to have the opportunity to work with these Congressional champions to address the critical national shortage of birth care providers, and to specifically **address the urgent lack of adequate racial representation in the midwifery workforce**.

"Midwives are integral to solving the current maternity care crisis in the United States," said Kristi Ridd-Young, Vice-President of Outreach for the Midwifery Education Accreditation Council. These funds will have a direct impact on the midwifery student's ability to graduate and practice as a qualified, credentialed midwife in their own underserved communities. The completion of a degree or certificate, particularly in midwifery, requires so much more than evidence-informed curriculum and qualified faculty. A safety net of support is vital to the success of midwifery students, especially those who are from disadvantaged backgrounds, racial or ethnic minorities, and who are first-generation college students."

This past fall, NACPM, with participation from MEAC, convened a Task Force to develop guidance for our MEAC-accredited schools to ensure they have the information needed to apply for grants provided by this \$2.5 million funding. Schools and programs can expect this guidance early in the new year.

We now look forward to working with the Maternity Care Caucus Co-Chairs in 2020 to ensure the passage of *H.R. 3849, the Midwives for Maximizing Optimal Maternity Services (MOMS) Act*. This legislation, introduced by these Congresswomen, will create historic and substantial new funding streams for midwifery education within Titles VII and VIII of the Public Health Service Act. It will provide grants to accredited midwifery programs for direct student support, expansion of programs, and support for the preceptor workforce. This legislation will also address the lack of adequate racial representation in midwifery by directing resources to schools and programs that train students who plan to practice in provider shortage areas, and that focus on increasing racial and ethnic representation in midwifery education and the workforce.