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Office of the Governor Timothy M. Kaine
Commonwealth of Virginia
Patrick Henry Building, 3rd Floor
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February 25, 2008

Governor Kaine,

In 2005, Governor Warner appointed me as the citizen representative on the Advisory Board on Midwifery. Although my term expires this July, I am writing to resign from my position effective immediately.

My resignation is given with a heavy heart. It was a difficult position to be in as the sole citizen voice. The Midwives Model of Care is a paradigm shift for the mainstream medical (American) culture and it is often difficult for individuals very involved in the medical community to understand the different perspectives and experiences of women choosing midwifery care. As a consumer who has benefited from home midwifery care on four occasions, I was in the unique position of being able to advise the Board of Medicine staff on the consumer experience of midwifery care.

Sadly, I found that I was often treated with disrespect, not only for having a non-mainstream medical perspective, but also because I was not a physician or seen as someone in an authority position. I bring this to your attention because I wish to help the next citizen representative on the Advisory Board and hope that your office can address this imbalance.

Birth is an emotional, mostly personal issue. It is not unusual for women to react emotionally to the subject of birth. Unfortunately, the BOM staff often acted unprofessionally with regards to the subject of licensed midwifery as well as to the midwifery consumer perspective.

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Licensed midwives play a vital role in our communities. They are giving low-risk and obstetrically under-served women high quality care. The General Assembly vote in 2005 to license these midwives was nearly unanimous. This vote was based largely upon the resounding requests of the citizens of the Commonwealth. Midwifery is a form of maternity care that saves healthcare dollars and women benefit greatly from the personalized care they receive.

Thank you for the privilege of serving the Commonwealth and thank you once again for your support in increasing access to midwifery care in Virginia. I appreciate your attention to this matter and feel free to contact me with questions or for clarification on the specifics of my experience.

Sincerely,

Sheryl L. Rivett

Cc:

Marilyn Tavenner, Secretary of Health and Human Resources

William Harp, Director of the Board of Medicine

Delegate Joe May

Senator Jill Holtzman Vogel

Senator Mary Margaret Whipple

Senator Frederick M. Quayle

Delegate Phillip Hamilton