

13 April 2011

Dear Senator,

This inquiry is with regard to homebirth midwives and the complaint process which is unfair, unjust, and unethical.

If there is a complaint about a midwife that is of an offence for which any person could be tried (such as sexual abuse, physical abuse, working under intoxication, etc.) then a restriction is right to be placed upon the person in question until such evidence is provided to the contrary, which may even be before an investigation may be completed. Yet, with the current system, it is not just complaints of this serious nature, but any complaint, which then puts restrictions on midwives registrations until investigations prove differently.

Changes to this system need to be made immediately. Professional midwives, working in the homebirth community are reliant on their business and avoid any risk by behaving in any inappropriate manner, which is quickly learned by homebirthing families. Thus, any complaints, which seem most commonly made by hospitals, are more likely about conflicts not with the service between midwife and family, but midwife and doctors or hospitals.

By example: when I transferred to hospital, my midwives were present. When the hospital midwife examined me and told me I had NOT dilated and showed no change after the 12 or so hours of the last reported status, I was alarmed and requested my midwife to examine me. I learn there was a change, small, but significant as it showed my body responding. I later found out that that small service was against hospital policy and my midwife was “politely” reprimanded. Since this was MY request, I was offended on her behalf.

Note: When a nurse (resident perhaps) punctured my vein (she admitted the needle went all the way through) and I bruised up massively, I was told by multiple staff it was due to my low platelet count (which was NOT so low, and the multiple points of drawn blood showed no similar bruising). This evidence of false information only adds to distrust of hospital staff.

Considering what you have just read, would you see a complaint and investigation filed against that offender? Complaints from patients are not putting those individuals (such as my nurse or hospital midwife) under the same restrictions as a homebirth midwife, when they are proving more harmful.

My request is that you help change the way investigations and complaints against these midwives are managed. Please work to protect private practice. Any continuation of the current practices will only cause harm to families who choose a homebirth, and the midwives who then lose income and security.

Sincerely,

Mrs. Hollie Ann Johnson Singleton