



"In every country where I have seen real progress in maternity care, it was women's groups working together with midwives that made the difference."

- Marsden Wagner, MD, MSPH

NOW Resolution: Expansion of Reproductive Freedom to Include Midwives Model of Care

WHEREAS, The National Organization for Women has long supported reproductive freedom as a priority issue; and

WHEREAS, NOW believes that women should have complete authority over their reproductive lives; and

WHEREAS, reproductive freedom not only includes the ability to decide whether or when to bear children, but also the right to devise a birth plan with a medical provider of their choice in either a hospital or an alternative setting such as a freestanding birth center or private residence; and

WHEREAS, women have historically given birth with midwives; and

WHEREAS, the practice of midwifery has many benefits including lower costs, lower rates of premature births, higher rates of breastfeeding; and greater satisfaction with the birthing experience, and has been endorsed by The World Health Organization; and

WHEREAS, midwifery has a lower incidence of medical interventions during the birthing process, including routine episiotomies and cesarean sections; and

WHEREAS, women's access to midwifery and traditional birthing practices are many times limited by restrictive laws and non-coverage by private insurance companies and state-subsidized funding;

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that The National Organization for Women's policy statements, brochures and fact sheets on reproductive freedom shall include references to birthing choices, safe childbearing practices, midwifery; and

BE IT FINALLY RESOLVED that NOW work in cooperation with state and national midwifery organizations to increase women's limited access to midwifery and community awareness of childbirth, pregnancy and early parenting choices.

Submitted by: The Health and Reproductive Rights Hearing of
The National Organization for Women National Conference,
Beverly Hills, CA July 3, 1999, Chair: Shiela Moore
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