



NO BRIDGES TO BIRTH!

**Fact Sheet on 3 Bills
In the House of Representatives
Addressing the potential closing of the
Newport Birthing Center**

**Scheduled to be heard in the
RI House Health Committee
on Lobby Day, April 9, 2026, in the afternoon:**

**Oral testimony in person is most effective.
Details to follow.**

**If unable to attend,
send written testimony (samples below)
between April 3 and 9, 2026, to this address:
HouseHealthandHumanServices@rilegislature.gov**

1. Bill H8203

**Rhode Island House Resolution H8203 (2026)
Protecting the Newport Hospital Birthing Center**

Sponsor: Rep. Lauren Carson

Purpose

House Resolution **H8203** ensures that if **Brown University Health** receives state funding, it must maintain **full, operational maternity**

services at Newport Hospital's Birthing Center. The resolution uses the state's financial leverage to protect access to local maternal and infant care for families on **Aquidneck Island and across Newport County.**

Why This Matters

The Newport Hospital Birthing Center is the **only hospital-based birthing facility on Aquidneck Island.** If it closes, expectant mothers would need to travel to hospitals in **Providence or other mainland communities** to deliver their babies.

This raises serious concerns for:

- **Maternal and infant safety**
- **Emergency response during labor**
- **Severe weather or bridge closures**
- **Equitable access to healthcare**

What H8203 Does

Protects Local Maternal Care

Requires Brown University Health to **maintain a fully functioning birthing center at Newport Hospital.**

Links State Funding to Service

If Brown University Health receives **state funds, grants, or financial support,** it must keep the birthing center open and operational.

Requires Full Operations

The center must continue providing:

- **24/7 labor and delivery services**
- **Obstetric physicians and/or certified nurse midwives**
- **Nursing and anesthesia coverage**
- **Neonatal care support**

Prevents “Partial Closures”

The resolution ensures the birthing center cannot be quietly reduced by:

- Eliminating inpatient deliveries
- Converting to triage-only services
- Routinely transferring laboring patients off island

Bottom Line

The State of Rhode Island should not subsidize a healthcare system that **eliminates essential maternal care for an entire region.**

H8203 ensures that if public funding supports Brown University Health, the Newport Hospital Birthing Center must remain open to serve the community.

Sample Letter to the House Health Committee:

[Date]

Dear Members of the Rhode Island General Assembly,

I am writing to express my support for House Resolution H8203, which ensures that if Brown University Health receives state funding, it must continue operating the Newport Hospital Birthing Center.

The Newport Hospital Birthing Center provides essential maternal and infant care for families on Aquidneck Island and throughout Newport County. Its potential closure would force expectant mothers to travel off island for delivery, often across bridges and potentially during emergencies, severe weather, or other circumstances that limit safe transportation.

House Resolution H8203 recognizes that when healthcare systems receive public funding, they also carry a responsibility to maintain essential services that communities rely upon. Linking state financial support to the continued operation of the Newport Hospital Birthing Center helps ensure that residents retain access to safe, local maternal care.

For many families in our region, the availability of a nearby birthing center is not simply a matter of convenience—it is a matter of safety, public health, and community stability.

I urge you to support H8203 and help ensure that the Newport Hospital Birthing Center remains open and available to the families who depend on it.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

[Name]
[City or Town], Rhode Island

2. Bill H7272:

Rhode Island House Bill H7272 (2026)

Protecting Access to Birthing Centers and Maternal Care

Sponsor: Rep. Lauren Carson

Purpose:

House Bill 7272 strengthens Rhode Island law to ensure that hospitals cannot close or significantly reduce birthing center services without a thorough state review, financial transparency, and meaningful public input. The bill is designed to protect access to safe, local maternal and infant care.

Why This Bill Matters

Across the country, hospitals have been closing maternity wards due to financial pressures or system consolidation. When birthing services close, families may be forced to travel long distances for care, increasing risks for mothers and babies.

For island and rural communities, loss of local birthing services can create serious safety concerns during emergencies, severe weather, or bridge closures.

H7272 ensures that these decisions cannot occur without careful oversight and community engagement.

Key Provisions

State Approval Required

Hospitals must obtain approval from the **Rhode Island Department of Health (RIDOH)** before:

- Closing a birthing center
- Relocating birthing services
- Reducing birthing services in a significant way

Clear Definition of “Significant Reduction”

The bill defines a significant reduction to include:

- A **25% or greater reduction** in birthing capacity or births served
- A **25% reduction in operating hours**
- Elimination of labor, delivery, or postpartum services
- Moving services to another municipality

Financial Transparency

Hospitals must submit detailed financial information demonstrating why the closure or reduction is necessary, including:

- Facility financial statements
- System-wide financial data if part of a hospital network
- Evidence that alternatives to closure were considered

Community Input and Public Process

Before a decision can be made:

- Public notice must be provided
- **Community hearings** must occur
- Stakeholders, patients, and local leaders must have an opportunity to comment

Expected Outcomes

H7272 will help ensure:

- Continued access to **high-quality maternal and infant care**
- **Transparency and accountability** from large healthcare systems
- Protection of **local healthcare infrastructure**
- Meaningful **community participation in healthcare decisions**

Bottom Line

House Bill 7272 ensures that decisions affecting access to birthing services in Rhode Island are made **transparently, responsibly, and with the community's voice at the table.**

No hospital should be allowed to close critical maternal care services without proving the necessity and allowing the public to be heard.

Sample Letter:

[Date]

Dear Members of the General Assembly,

I am writing to express my support for House Bill 7272, which strengthens Rhode Island's oversight before a hospital can close or significantly reduce birthing services.

The possible closure of the Newport Hospital Birthing Center highlights why this legislation is so important. The center provides essential maternal and infant care to families across Aquidneck Island and Newport County. If these services were eliminated, many expectant mothers would be forced to travel off island for delivery—often across bridges and potentially during emergencies or severe weather.

House Bill 7272 ensures that decisions affecting critical healthcare services are made transparently and with proper review. It requires hospitals to provide financial justification, allows for public input, and gives the Rhode Island Department of Health the opportunity to fully evaluate the community impact before any closure occurs.

Access to safe, local maternal care is fundamental to the health of Rhode Island families. This bill helps ensure that communities have a voice in decisions that affect such vital services.

Sincerely,

[Name]

[City or Town], Rhode Island

3. H8203 THE RHODE ISLAND MATERNAL HEALTH IMPROVEMENT AND EQUITY ACT OF 2026

Rhode Island House Bill H7322 (2026)

Sponsor: Rep. Lauren Carson

Summary:

House Bill **H7322** establishes a statewide initiative to improve **maternal health outcomes and equity in Rhode Island**. The bill supports coordinated state action to expand access to maternal care, address disparities in maternal health, strengthen the maternal healthcare workforce, and improve data collection and accountability.

Purpose:

To create a long-term, statewide strategy to ensure that all Rhode Island families have access to **safe, high-quality pregnancy, childbirth, and postpartum care**.

Sample Letter:

[Date]

Dear Members of the Rhode Island General Assembly,

I am writing to express my support for House Bill H7322, which seeks to strengthen maternal health outcomes and equity across Rhode Island.

Improving maternal health requires a coordinated statewide approach that addresses access to care, workforce capacity, and disparities in health outcomes. H7322 takes an important step toward building that framework

by supporting better data collection, expanding maternal health resources, and encouraging collaboration among healthcare providers, public health agencies, and community organizations.

Every family in Rhode Island deserves access to safe, high-quality pregnancy and postpartum care. By focusing on maternal health equity and long-term system improvements, this legislation helps ensure that mothers and infants receive the care and support they need.

I urge you to support House Bill H7322 and continue Rhode Island's commitment to improving maternal and infant health for all communities.

Sincerely,

[Name]

[City or Town], Rhode Island