

1 TO THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES:

2 The Committee on Health Care to which was referred Senate Bill No. 18  
3 entitled “An act relating to licensure of freestanding birth centers” respectfully  
4 reports that it has considered the same and recommends that the House propose  
5 to the Senate that the bill be amended by striking out all after the enacting  
6 clause and inserting in lieu thereof the following:

7 Sec. 1. 18 V.S.A. chapter 53 is added to read:

8 CHAPTER 53. BIRTH CENTER LICENSING

9 § 2351. DEFINITIONS

10 As used in this chapter:

11 (1) “Birth center” means a facility the primary purposes of which are to  
12 provide midwifery care, low-risk deliveries, and newborn care immediately  
13 after delivery, for a stay of generally less than 24 hours. The term does not  
14 include a facility that is a hospital, is part of a hospital, or is owned by a  
15 hospital; a facility that is an ambulatory surgical center; or the residence of the  
16 individual giving birth. A birth center may be located on the grounds of a  
17 hospital.

18 (2) “Certified nurse midwife” means an advanced practice registered  
19 nurse licensed in accordance with 26 V.S.A. chapter 28, subchapter 2 who has  
20 specialized training in childbirth, newborn care, and reproductive health care  
21 services.

1           (3) “Change of ownership” means a change in the majority or  
2           controlling interest in an established birth center to another person.

3           (4) “Corrective action plan” means a written strategy for correcting an  
4           issue of partial compliance, deficiency, or violation of this chapter or rules  
5           adopted pursuant to this chapter.

6           (5) “Licensed maternity care provider” means a licensed provider whose  
7           professional scope of practice, as established under Vermont law, includes  
8           preconception, prenatal, labor, birth, and postpartum care and early care of a  
9           newborn and who may be the primary attendant during the perinatal period.

10           (6) “Licensed midwife” means a professional licensed in accordance  
11           with 26 V.S.A. chapter 85.

12           (7) “Licensed provider” means an individual licensed or certified in  
13           Vermont to provide specific health care-related services within a scope of  
14           practice defined by licensing statutes and rules, and may include advanced  
15           practice registered nurses, including certified nurse midwives; licensed  
16           midwives; physician assistants; naturopathic physicians with a childbirth  
17           endorsement in accordance with 26 V.S.A. §§ 4122(b) and 4125(b); and  
18           physicians.

1     § 2352. LICENSE; PROHIBITIONS

2           (a) No person shall establish, maintain, or operate a birth center in this  
3     State without first obtaining a license for the birth center in accordance with  
4     this chapter.

5           (b) A birth center may be independently owned and operated by a licensed  
6     maternity care provider or any other person who complies with the  
7     requirements of this chapter.

8           (c) A birth center shall not offer or provide epidural anesthesia or a  
9     cesarean delivery.

10          (d) No person shall represent itself as a “birth center” or use the term “birth  
11     center” in its title or in its advertising, publications, or other form of  
12     communication unless the person has been licensed as a birth center in  
13     accordance with the provisions of this chapter.

14          (e) A license is not transferable or assignable and shall be issued only for  
15     the premises and persons named in the application.

16     § 2353. APPLICATION; FEE

17           (a) An application for licensure of a birth center shall be made to the  
18     Department of Health in the manner specified by the Department and shall  
19     include all information required by the Department.

20           (b)(1) Each application for an initial license, renewal of a license, or a  
21     change of ownership shall be accompanied by a fee of \$250.00.

1           (2) Fees collected under this section shall be credited to the Hospital  
2           Licensing Fees Special Fund and shall be available to the Department of  
3           Health to offset the costs of licensing birth centers.

4           § 2354. LICENSE REQUIREMENTS

5           Upon receipt of an application for a license and the licensing fee, the  
6           Department of Health shall issue a license if it determines, after an inspection  
7           conducted by the Department or its designee, that the applicant is able to  
8           operate a birth center in accordance with rules adopted by the Department.

9           § 2355. REVOCATION OF LICENSE; HEARING

10           The Department of Health, after notice and opportunity for hearing to the  
11           applicant or licensee, is authorized to condition, deny, suspend, or revoke a  
12           license in any case in which it finds that there has been a substantial failure to  
13           comply with the requirements established under this chapter. Such notice shall  
14           be served by registered mail or by personal service, shall set forth the reasons  
15           for the proposed action, and shall set a date not less than 60 days from the date  
16           of the mailing or service on which the applicant or licensee shall be given  
17           opportunity for a hearing. After the hearing, or upon default of the applicant or  
18           licensee, the Department shall file its findings of fact and conclusions of law.  
19           A copy of the findings and decision shall be sent by registered mail or served  
20           personally upon the applicant or licensee. The procedure governing hearings  
21           authorized by this section shall be set forth in the rules adopted pursuant to

1 section 2359 of this chapter and shall not be subject to the contested case  
2 provisions of 3 V.S.A. chapter 25, subchapter 2.

3 § 2356. APPEAL

4 Any applicant or licensee, or the State acting through the Attorney General,  
5 aggrieved by the decision of the Department of Health after a hearing may  
6 appeal the decision in accordance with section 128 of this title. Pursuant to  
7 section 129 of this title, an appeal pursuant to this section shall not stay the  
8 effectiveness of an order entered in accordance with section 2355 of this  
9 chapter, but any party is permitted to seek a stay order in the Superior Court in  
10 which the appeal is being heard.

11 § 2357. INSPECTIONS

12 (a) The Department of Health or its designee shall make or cause to be  
13 made such inspections and investigations as the Department or its designee  
14 deems necessary.

15 (b) A birth center, including its building and grounds and, in accordance  
16 with applicable law, its records, shall be subject to inspection by the  
17 Department and its designee at all times.

18 (c) If a birth center is found to be out of compliance with any requirement  
19 of this chapter or rules adopted pursuant to this chapter, the Department may  
20 condition, deny, suspend, revoke, or refuse to renew the birth center's license  
21 or may ask the birth center to develop and implement a corrective action plan.

1        (d) If the Department finds a violation as the result of an inspection or  
2        investigation, the Department shall post a report on the Department’s website  
3        summarizing the violation and any corrective action required.

4        § 2358. RECORDS

5        (a) Information received by the Department of Health through filed reports,  
6        inspections, or as otherwise authorized by law shall:

7                (1) not be disclosed publicly in a manner that identifies or may lead to  
8                the identification of one or more individuals or birth centers;

9                (2) be exempt from public inspection and copying under the Public  
10               Records Act; and

11               (3) be kept confidential except as it relates to a proceeding regarding  
12               licensure of a birth center.

13        (b) The provisions of subsection (a) of this section shall not apply to the  
14        summary reports of violations required to be posted on the Department’s  
15        website pursuant to section 2357 of this chapter.

16        § 2359. RULES

17        The Department of Health shall adopt rules in accordance with 3 V.S.A.  
18        chapter 25 as needed to carry out the purposes of this chapter. The rules shall  
19        be based on the national birth center standards published by the American  
20        Association of Birth Centers and shall, at a minimum, include provisions  
21        regarding:

1           (1) requirements for operating a birth center, including requirements for  
2           safety, sanitation, and health;

3           (2) obtaining, storing, and dispensing pharmaceuticals consistent with  
4           State and federal laws;

5           (3) requirements for notice to the Department of Health when there is a  
6           change in ownership of a birth center and any additional licensing  
7           requirements related to a change in ownership;

8           (4) the scope of services that may be provided at a birth center,  
9           including risk factors that preclude a patient from receiving labor and delivery  
10          services at a birth center;

11          (5) appropriate staffing for a birth center, including the types of licensed  
12          providers who may practice at a birth center;

13          (6) birth center complaint processes;

14          (7) birth center facility, equipment, and supply requirements, including  
15          requirements for the maintenance of safety, sanitation, and health;

16          (8) record retention and confidentiality;

17          (9) quality assurance and improvement;

18          (10) processes for the development, submission, approval, and  
19          implementation of corrective action plans;

1           (11) a requirement for written practice guidelines and policies that  
2           include procedures for transferring a patient to a hospital if circumstances  
3           warrant; and

4           (12)(A) requirements for written policies and procedures for  
5           collaboration with hospitals, other agencies and facilities, and individuals to  
6           provide services to patients as appropriate, including:

7                   (i) laboratory and diagnostic services;

8                   (ii) childbirth education and parenting education support services;

9                   (iii) obstetric consultation services;

10                  (iv) pediatric consultation services;

11                  (v) transport services;

12                  (vi) obstetric and newborn acute care in licensed hospitals; and

13                  (vii) home health care services;

14           (B) a requirement that the policies and procedures established  
15           pursuant to subdivision (A) of this subdivision (12) are provided to the relevant  
16           service providers upon request; and

17           (C) a requirement that the birth center provide the health record of  
18           the patient or the newborn, or both, to the receiving service provider upon  
19           referral or transfer, in accordance with applicable privacy laws.

1     § 2360. NO EFFECT ON SCOPE OF SERVICES

2           (a) Nothing in this chapter or in rules adopted pursuant to this chapter shall  
3     be construed to expand or limit the scope of the services that a licensed  
4     midwife, certified nurse midwife, or other provider may offer at a birth center  
5     or perform in a space that is shared with or adjacent to a birth center.

6           (b) A birth center may serve as a location for additional services offered in  
7     shared or adjacent spaces, including outpatient gynecologic care, primary care,  
8     and education and support services, provided that any licensed provider  
9     providing services in those spaces shall only provide those services that are  
10    within the licensed provider’s authorized scope of practice.

11    Sec. 2. 8 V.S.A. § 4099d is amended to read:

12    § 4099d. MIDWIFERY COVERAGE; ~~HOME BIRTHS~~

13           (a) A health insurance plan or health benefit plan providing maternity  
14    benefits shall also provide coverage for services rendered by a midwife  
15    licensed pursuant to 26 V.S.A. chapter 85 or an advanced practice registered  
16    nurse licensed pursuant to 26 V.S.A. chapter 28 who is certified as a nurse  
17    midwife for services within the licensed midwife’s or certified nurse midwife’s  
18    scope of practice and provided in a hospital, birth center, or other health care  
19    facility or at home.

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1 Sec. 3. 18 V.S.A. § 9435 is amended to read:

2 § 9435. EXCLUSIONS

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4 (i) Excluded from this subchapter are birth centers that are licensed  
5 pursuant to chapter 53 of this title or are proposed to be established and  
6 licensed pursuant to chapter 53 of this title.

7 Sec. 4. AGENCY OF HUMAN SERVICES; MEDICAID; REQUEST FOR  
8 FEDERAL APPROVAL

9 The Agency of Human Services shall seek approval from the Centers for  
10 Medicare and Medicaid Services to allow Vermont Medicaid to cover prenatal,  
11 maternity, postpartum, and newborn services provided at a licensed birth  
12 center and to allow Vermont Medicaid to reimburse separately for birth center  
13 services, including birth center facility fees, and for professional services.

14 Sec. 5. EFFECTIVE DATES

15 (a) Sec. 1 (birth center licensing) shall take effect on January 1, 2027 or the  
16 effective date of the birth center rules adopted by the Department of Health,  
17 whichever comes first.

18 (b) Sec. 2 (8 V.S.A. § 4099d) shall take effect on January 1, 2027.

19 (c) Sec. 3 (18 V.S.A. § 9435a) shall take effect on July 1, 2025.

20 (d) Sec. 4 (Agency of Human Services; Medicaid; request for federal  
21 approval) shall take effect on passage, and the Medicaid coverage shall begin

1 on the later of the date of approval or the effective date of the birth center rules  
2 adopted by the Department of Health.

3 (e) This section shall take effect on passage.

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17 (Committee vote: \_\_\_\_\_)

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Representative \_\_\_\_\_

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FOR THE COMMITTEE