

August 9, 2016

**This comment is in regard to the maternal-infant petition for the Summer Petitions for Proposed 2017 State Medical Facilities Plan:**

I have been involved with helping mothers breastfeed and training other women to serve in that capacity, as well. I have also taught primary grades in a Wake County public school which served the population in Southeast Raleigh. I have seen first hand both the benefits and the hardships faced by families in regard to healthcare, especially with regard to their children.

As a lifelong educator with a speciality in Early Childhood Education, it has been my observation, borne out by academic research, that the earlier and stronger the bond between mother and child, the better the outcome for that pair, for the community, and for society as a whole. Individual circumstances vary widely, but pregnancy, childbirth and the postpartum period remain essentially biological functions. The best thing we can give to women who are experiencing this tumultuous period in their lives is education and one-on-one support.

It is no longer common for families to have the inter-generational support that they once had. In addition, societal factors such as substance abuse, poverty, and lack of education call strongly upon professionals to intervene for the good of the mother, infant, and siblings. If in-home visits from well-trained professionals were routine, problems could be caught early, resulting in fewer medical emergencies, hospital admissions, early cessation of breastfeeding, and even infant deaths. It is a low-cost, high impact strategy for helping families who often struggle for balance after the birth of a child.

Forty-two years ago, after the birth of my first child in Illinois, a visiting nurse came to my house for three weekly visits to answer questions, evaluate our progress, and offer advice. As a first time mother, far from my own relatives, she was a beacon of light and hope for me. I was a married college student, on WIC, and beset with doubts about my ability to take care of my child. This county public health worker provided much needed support at a critical time. It seems the least we can do for our most vulnerable citizens.

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