On Saturday, November 23, 2013, the Department of Health and Environmental Control (DHEC) sent out citations across the state for failure to comply with birth center regulations due to a new interpretation of guidelines. This essentially puts all state birth centers, including Charleston Birth Place (CBP), located in North Charleston, out of business. The effect of DHEC's decision will put CBP's qualified and caring certified nurse-midwives out of a job and derail Lowcountry family's plans for peaceful and safe births.

CBP opened its doors in 2007, so far helping over 1,100 babies come into this world. The birth center has an incredible safety record, due to its stringent guidelines for care. CBP only accepts low-risk mothers who wish for vaginal births; high-risk mothers belong under the care of OB-GYNs. For example, up to June 2013, only 13% of laboring women have had to transfer to Trident Medical Center, of which CBP has an agreement of care. When transfers occur, CBP's overseeing OB-GYNs (Drs. James Martin and Christina Case) as well as the pediatricians at Sweetgrass Pediatrics work with the CNMs to coordinate care. If CBP patients are able to continue to labor, the CNMs will help deliver the child. Only 0.1% of CBP patients were transferred due to an acute emergency. Not only do mothers benefit from the midwifery model of care, but the babies do, too. The newborn transfer rate to Trident Medical Center is 1.5%, with only 0.3% cases being an acute emergency. Of those 1,100 births, there have been no maternal or neonatal mortalities.

Vaginal births also save families and the state of South Carolina significant amounts of money. CBP's c-section rate is currently 7%. Compared to Medicaid patients' c-section rates of 35% and privately insured patients' rates of 39%. If South Carolina is serious about reducing infant mortality and providing safe and affordable health care, free-standing birth centers make sense.

According to the American Association of Birth Centers (AABC), of which CBP's director, Lesley Rathbun is current president, birth center births on average cost \$2,277. Compare that to hospital births with no complications at a cost of \$8,920 or c-sections with no complications at \$14,900. Birth centers are a cost effective option.

CBP and its supporters are currently leading a charge to update the state's current regulations to match the national standards for birth centers. CBP already is nationally accredited by the Commission of Accreditation for Birth Centers (CABC) and is an AABC member.

Please stand with these men, women and children who support CBP, as well as the dedicated women who have devoted their lives to delivering Lowcountry babies. Please help us protect our right to choose where we give birth and go to the 'How you can help' section for specific actions to support CBP.