

## So Much to Celebrate!

Now that the 2017 legislative session is officially over and Governor Inslee has signed the state budget, MAWS is thrilled to announce the following array of successes:

Thanks to the budget proviso that we advocated for, the \$516 cap on the midwifery licensing fee will remain in effect at least until July 1, 2018—this includes the \$16 fee that allows all licensed midwives in WA State to access HEAL-WA, the University of Washington health resources website

The Medicaid reimbursement rate for the birth center facility fee has TRIPLED, increasing from \$584 to \$1,742. What we've heard from birth center owners is that this is "a game-changer" which will not only make birth centers more sustainable, but will also make it possible for birth centers and midwives with birth center privileges to provide services to many more families on Medicaid. There are currently 17 licensed freestanding birth centers in Washington State, almost all of which are on the west side of the state. It is our hope that this dramatic increase in the Medicaid reimbursement rate will enable midwives east of the mountains to consider opening birth centers to serve their more rural communities and make this model of care more widely available.

With strong bipartisan support, the Legislature passed a bill that establishes the most forward-thinking paid family and medical leave law in the nation. Governor Inslee has secured a federal grant to begin designing a paid family leave program that will provide up to 16 weeks of leave for those wanting to take time off to care for a new infant or care for a family member. Depending on their earnings, employees will receive up to 90 percent of their wage or salary or up to \$1,000 per week. The program will be implemented by 2020. Washington State has now joined California, New Jersey, Rhode Island, and New York in making sure working families will have the ability to care for their families and loved ones without jeopardizing their economic security.

A huge thank you to all the midwives, midwifery students, and midwifery supporters who showed up on MAWS Lobby Day and to all of you who contacted your legislators! And, of course, so much love and gratitude to MAWS Lobbyist Amber Ulvenes, who just keeps making miracles happen.

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