



## Alabama Chapter

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### **Position Statement on Home Births in Alabama • March 2017**

While home births have certainly increased in popularity, the Alabama Chapter of the American Academy of Pediatrics asserts that the safest place for birth is in a hospital under the care of licensed health professionals who have undergone extensive training.

In Alabama, we have laws governing seat belt use for adults and car seat laws for children. These are not for the overwhelming majority of car rides that are routine and low risk, but for the safety of those citizens when a routine outing becomes a dangerous accident. We don't expect people to be able to put a seatbelt on at the last second to save them. We use the seatbelt every time, so that it is there when needed. We do this to keep ourselves and our children safe.

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Truly, having a home birth has an appeal - being in familiar surroundings, doing it "the old fashioned way." And thankfully, most deliveries, whether at home or in the hospital, go well without complications. It is easy to become complacent of the potential risks present in even a routine delivery. Every delivery is routine, until it is not.

Obstetricians (OBs) have a four-year residency following four years of medical school to learn the skills necessary to help women during pregnancy and deliveries. Nurse midwives go through nursing school and nurse practitioner training to work in collaboration with an OB to do the same. Pediatricians complete three years of residency following four years of medical school to learn how to resuscitate a newborn. This extensive training is not for the majority of "low-risk pregnancies"...it is to step in when the "low-risk pregnancy" suddenly and unexpectedly becomes life-threatening to mother and baby.

Delivering in the hospital with medical supervision provides the seatbelt for when things go wrong. With the Alabama infant mortality rate increasing 10 percent last year to 8.9 per 1,000 births, why would we begin to offer our children anything but the safest place to begin their life?

For these reasons, we support the safety mechanisms put in place in Rep. April Weaver's bill, HB 344, and ask that the legislature defer deliberation on HB 315 and 316 and instead work with Representative Weaver on her legislation, which would allow for certified (non-nurse) midwives to assist in births at birthing centers under optimal, safe circumstances.