



**AABC**  
AMERICAN ASSOCIATION  
OF  
BIRTH CENTERS

# 2024 Election

## 2024 CANDIDATES for BOARD OF DIRECTORS

### DIRECTORS (choose 4)



**JENNIFER CASTO**  
LPN

Jennifer Casto was born and raised in West Virginia. She has been a Licensed Practical Nurse for 18 years and is currently in an accelerated RN program, to finish in 12 months. She is proud to work at the only freestanding birth center in WV. The FamilyCare OB/GYN & Birth Center has been her home for seven years and is the founding location of a community health center with more than twenty-five locations. Jennifer's short title is Nurse and Birth Center Coordinator. Nevertheless, she holds other responsibilities within FamilyCare such as the Clinical/Practice Team Lead, BLS/ACLS/PALS Instructor, Birth Nurse, Birth Center Coordinator, Childbirth Educator, and assists with all accreditation/licensing compliance.

Jennifer is constantly looking for ways to help the birthing community and bring more birth centers to the people of West Virginia. Recently, she collaborated with select WVACNM & MAWV members to rewrite legislation regarding state licensure of freestanding birth centers, WV House Bill 5054. She works closely with the WV Perinatal Partnership with successful grants to give first-time mothers access to doula services free of cost to them. Jennifer also assists the WVDHHR on their SHHIMMR Board (Syphilis, HIV, Hepatitis C, Infant Morbidity and Mortality Review) looking for ways to help their more at-risk birthing populations. She is also a current member of PSI-WV, Postpartum Support International. Personally, Jennifer is a single mother to a wonderful 14-year-old daughter and is a performing belly dancer in her free time.

*"I have over 18 years of nursing experience, of which, eight have been serving the pregnant population of West Virginia in the only freestanding birth center in the entire state. I am born, raised, and live in the Appalachian Mountains and am deeply connected to it. I strive to make sure our population has the best obstetrical care and education available to them. It takes a village to make a birth center run and as the Birth Center Coordinator, I know what it takes behind the scenes to make it*

*successful. I am consistently looking for ways to make our birth center better from offering free doula services to providing Lamaze centered childbirth education. I hope, with working for AABC, I am able to assist in bringing more birth centers to Appalachia."* Jennifer Casto



**AMY GOH**  
PhD, CNM

Amy Goh (she/her) is a midwife at Cambridge Health Alliance and post-doctoral researcher at Yale University.

For the past 12 years she has worked as a midwife in diverse settings, including at the Cambridge Birth Center where she had her two children. During her term on the AABC Board of Directors, she became Co-Chair of the Diversity & Inclusion Committee where she helped to launch the Community Agreements and Inclusive Language Guidelines. She is also a member on the Research Committee and has a manuscript in review examining Asian birthing people outcomes from the AABC's Perinatal Data Registry. She is Adjunct Faculty at Thomas Jefferson University's Midwifery program. She was a former Health Equity Fellow through the Center for Health Equity Education and Advocacy and a previous Duke-Johnson and Johnson Nurse Leadership Fellow.

Previous to her midwifery career, Amy worked to improve and better understand the complexities of health and rights in global communities. After her stint as a Peace Corps Volunteer in Cape Verde, she completed her MPhil thesis in International Development on the socio-political aspects of maternal mortality in Brazil. Her subsequent international work gave her the opportunity to observe a midwife in Ethiopia assist her patient to safely birth her baby; after this experience, she knew she wanted to become a midwife.

*"I desire to continue to serve on the AABC Board of Directors to ensure that the AABC continues to commit to their anti-racist agenda. I believe that this is not only through the existence of the Diversity & Inclusion Committee but to confirm that all committees and events function with an inclusive lens with no tolerance for hate."* Amy Goh



## CARLA MORROW MSN, CNM

Carla Morrow is a Certified Nurse-Midwife with over twenty-five years of experience providing care to women and their families. She earned her

master's degree in nursing from Texas Christian University in 2004 and a post-master's certificate as a women's health nurse practitioner from the University of Texas Southwestern Medical Center at Dallas in 2006. Recognizing her passion for attending women during labor and birth, she pursued midwifery and obtained her Doctor of Nursing Practice degree from Baylor University in 2010.

As a visionary entrepreneur, she founded the Fort Worth Birthing & Wellness Center in 2013 after successfully establishing hospital midwifery services in Cleburne, Dallas, Fort Worth, and Mansfield. Since its accreditation in 2014, the birth center has received numerous community awards, reflecting its commitment to excellence in care. She enjoys the business aspects of midwifery and designing sustainable practices that ensure long-term community impact. Additionally, she leads and chairs the Texas Sustainability Committee with the Coalition of Texas Birth Centers and serves on the Industry Relations Committee with AABC.

Carla has been married to her husband, Shawn, for 32 years and cherishes the time she gets to spend with her grandchildren. She also enjoys visiting her family farm in Rising Star, Texas.

*"I would love to be considered for a board member position with the American Association of Birth Centers (AABC). My passion for birth center care stems from a commitment to providing quality care and ensuring sustainability. As a dedicated midwife, I believe birth centers offer invaluable, compassionate care that respects women's choices. I also believe we must focus on operational excellence and financial sustainability to continue these services.*

*Coming from a state with complex maternal morbidity issues and challenging advocacy and policy rights for women, I am deeply committed to advancing birth equity. By addressing disparities in maternal care and promoting inclusive practices, we can ensure all families have access to high-quality birth center care.*

*In this role, I aim to support initiatives that enhance care quality, ensure financial health, and advocate for positive leadership. I am dedicated to working collaboratively to develop strategies for our industry's challenges and opportunities. Together, we can strengthen our birth centers and ensure they remain beacons of excellence for generations to come."* Carla Morrow



## MEGHAN NOWLAND BS, LCPM, IBCLC

Meghan Nowland grew up as the fifth child in a family of fourteen and has always been around babies and loved them. In 2010 she caught her niece at

her sister's home birth in Virginia, which led her down the path of becoming a midwife. Meghan has a bachelor's degree in midwifery from the Midwives College of Utah and moved to Cincinnati with a passion for improving Ohio's maternity care. She regularly volunteers to teach community childbirth education classes and for the Kentucky Home Birth Coalition. She is a founder of Ohio's chapter of the National Association of Certified Professional Midwives and Buckeye Birth Coalition.

Before moving to Ohio, Meghan lived in San Antonio, Texas for two years and worked at Birth Center Stone Oak and with home birth midwives Robin Rabenschlag, Julie Hatfield, and Janet Dirmeyer. She earned her CPM certification in 2014 and has been practicing as a home birth midwife ever since. In 2017, she became certified as an International Board-Certified Lactation Consultant. Most recently Meghan has been involved with legislative efforts to increase access to midwives and serving on the Kentucky Midwives Advisory Council, creating regulations for licensure of CPMs. In August 2020 she became the first Certified Professional Midwife to become licensed in the state of Kentucky!

Meghan founded Cincinnati Birth Center in 2019 because there were no licensed freestanding birth centers in Ohio. She believes her community needs more birth options and midwives need more sustainable employment opportunities. Meghan currently serves on the AABC Government Affairs Committee and as Alternate Director on the AABC Board of Directors.

*"Midwives and Midwifery Centers are critical to solving the United States' maternity care crisis. Midwife-led birth centers are the future of maternity care. When I started the Cincinnati Birth Center there weren't any licensed freestanding birth centers in Ohio. Trailblazing is always a struggle to make your way. Opening a birth center has taxed and challenged me mentally, physically, and financially. AABC has been a bright signpost along the way and its community has been a tremendously valuable resource and support for shared struggles. I'd like it to be easier for others who want to open up birth centers. I offer an empathetic ear to other pioneers, practical guidance for those who ask, and a sincere desire to give back to this community through service."* Meghan Nowland



## MICHELLE RHUDE MSN, CNM

With over 25 years of experience as a certified nurse midwife, Michelle Rhude has dedicated her career to providing compassionate, autonomous, and comprehensive maternity care. As the owner and operator of the only CABC-accredited freestanding birth center in Eastern North Carolina, Michelle has established a reputation for excellence in personalized, patient-centered birthing experiences. La Vita Bella Birth Center is renowned for its commitment to safety, quality, and holistic care, reflecting Michelle's unwavering dedication to her profession.

Michelle's journey into midwifery was inspired by her deep passion for supporting women and families through all phases of life. Over the years, she has attended thousands of births, each one reinforcing her belief in the importance of empowering women with choices and information about their birthing options. Beyond her professional achievements, Michelle is a wife and proud mother of four boys. Her family life is enriched further by her role as Mimi to two beloved grandchildren, with whom she shares a special bond by having attended them at their births. Michelle's experiences as a mother and grandmother have only enhanced her empathetic approach to midwifery, allowing her to connect personally with the families she serves.

Michelle is also the spouse of a military veteran, which has given her a unique perspective on the challenges faced by military women and families. Her commitment to providing accessible and supportive care extends to this community, ensuring that military families receive the respect and specialized attention they deserve. Her dedication to midwifery, her family, and her community is evident in every aspect of her life. She continues to advocate for high standards in maternity care and remains passionate about her role in empowering women through autonomous, informed and personalized childbirth experiences.

*“As the director and owner of the only freestanding birth center in Eastern North Carolina, joining the board of directors for the American Association of Birth Centers (AABC) aligns perfectly with my commitment to advancing high-quality, patient-centered maternity care. Over the past seven years, I have dedicated myself to building a thriving midwifery practice. With much hard work and determination, we have successfully obtained the prestigious Commission for the Accreditation of Birth Centers (CABC) national accreditation. This achievement emphasizes my commitment to maintaining the highest standards of care in our community. Serving on the board would allow me to advocate for policies that support the growth and sustainability of birth centers, ensuring that*

*more families have access to safe, personalized birthing options. Additionally, I am passionate about fostering collaboration among birth centers nationwide, sharing best practices, and contributing to the development of educational programs for midwives. My goal is to continue to ensure a future where birth centers play a pivotal role in maternity care that respects and meets the diverse needs of all birthing families.” Michelle Rhude*



## TIFFANY VASSELL BA, BSN, RN

Tiffany Vassell is a dedicated advocate for maternal health and equity, currently serving as the Manager of Community Engagement and Communications at the Neighborhood Birth Center. With nearly a decade of experience as a labor and delivery nurse, she has also worked as a substance use nurse, assisting patients in their recovery in Boston. Tiffany is a passionate supporter of midwifery care, reproductive justice, bodily autonomy, and access to out-of-hospital birth options, particularly for Black and underserved communities.

She co-authored the award-winning book ‘Preparation for a Hospital Birth’, providing invaluable insights into hospital birthing experiences. Tiffany is the Vice President of the Bay State Birth Coalition's board and founded the Nurses for Black Maternal Health and Equity Organization to diversify the perinatal workforce. She actively contributes to the birth center community as a steering committee member for Mind the Gap and Birth Equity & Justice Massachusetts. Tiffany also serves as Co-Chair of the Harvard Catalyst Community Coalition for Equity in Research and as Chair of the Massachusetts DPH Public Health Data Warehouse Community Advisory Board, where she provides expert input on proposals and protocols.

Tiffany completed the Young American Leaders Program at Harvard Business School and is a member of the Sigma Theta Tau Nursing Honor Society for Leadership. Her book received the 2024 National Black Nurses Association award for exceptional literary work promoting maternal health equity. She has been recognized with the 2022 Image of the Professional Nurse award by the Massachusetts Nursing Association and was named one of the 2022 Ten Outstanding Young Leaders by the Greater Boston Chamber of Commerce.

*“As the Manager of Community Engagement and Communications at Neighborhood Birth Center and a former labor and delivery nurse, I am deeply committed to improving maternal health outcomes in Massachusetts and across the country. My role as Vice President on the Bay State Birth Coalition's board has strengthened my understanding of the policy and advocacy landscape in*

*Massachusetts and nationally. Serving on the American Association of Birth Centers (AABC) Board of Directors would allow me to leverage my clinical and leadership experience to promote the birth center model, support community-based maternal care, and advocate for policies that enhance accessibility and quality of care for all families.” Tiffany Vassell*

## ALTERNATE DIRECTOR (choose 1)



### REBECKAH ORTON BS, RN

Rebeckah Orton is a biologist and registered nurse who founded, owns, and runs Astoria Birth Center & Family Medicine in Astoria, Oregon. She has served for two years on the board of directors for the Oregon Association of Birth Centers and for two years on the industry relations committee of the AABC. Rebeckah has spearheaded various pieces of legislation and regulation regarding Oregon Medicaid doula payments as well as birth center reimbursement and has seen considerable successes related to those efforts. She has co-taught the Birth Center Sustainability workshop for the past year and has consulted and advised on numerous projects, large and small, relating mostly to equitable insurance recognition and contracting and enforcement of the Affordable Care Act.

*“I am running for this position because too many of us are on the brink of failure and it is time that we come together and succeed as a whole. The industry standard is holding us all back at a time when we should be thriving and expanding. We need each other, and the time is now to address the changes we need to make together to fix this. My goal as Alternate Director is to put my knowledge and experience behind meaningful movement that will make it so we can all thrive and expand. I will lend my support to bringing us together on the things we can agree on and use my voice and talents to advocate for those items. Birth centers need to be fully integrated and to take our place as the most viable solution to the glaring and inexcusable health inequities in this nation, and I can help with that.” Rebeckah Orton*



### DINAH WARANCH MA, CNM

Born in London, Dinah Waranch is the daughter of a rebel physician. As Dinah says, “It’s in my blood!” She studied social and political science at the University of

Cambridge and then emigrated to Jerusalem, Israel, where she went to graduate school to study city planning. Dinah gave birth with a staff midwife at a Jerusalem hospital and knew immediately that she was in the wrong profession. Upon moving to Texas several years later, Dinah became a childbirth educator, transitioned through several nursing positions and eventually worked at one of the only birth centers in Dallas at the time, assisting at births and helping the center to prepare for accreditation.

After midwifery school at Frontier, Dinah founded a birth center which, from the start, accepted Medicaid and has always had a diverse clientele. She has always encouraged birth centers to take Medicaid and has presented on the topic at a state midwifery conference. She believes that we cannot be only a boutique service but must reach all those who seek our care. Dinah has advocated for improved reimbursement from Texas Medicaid and is currently working with the Sustainability Committee of the Coalition of Texas Birth Centers to do just that.

Her entire midwifery career has been in the community.

*“Now that I am no longer working full time, I would like to serve the community birth world in a way that is commensurate with my passion and my abilities. As a member from Texas, knowing that almost a quarter of all American birth centers are in my state, it is important to have Texas representation on the board.*

*Right now, we are at an inflection point of recognition and advancement for birth centers. We must work to reduce barriers to the establishment of new centers and increase understanding of the model. CMS’s TMaH program has the potential to start a revolution in maternity care in this country, to center whole person midwifery care and value-based payment models that make birth centers accessible to all.*

*As Alternate Director, which is a short-term position, I could learn the culture of the board and discover how I can best contribute.” Dinah Waranch*