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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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New Maternal Health Equity Center Opens on Sisters Hospital Campus

Collaborative Community Resource Aims to Bridge Gaps in Access to Maternal Care and Foster Positive Mother and Baby Health Outcomes

Catholic Health and Calming Nature Doula unveiled a new Maternal Health Equity Center today on the Sisters of Charity Hospital Campus. The Center is designed to provide education and enhance care to improve health outcomes for new and expecting moms in the City of Buffalo, including those who face health disparities based on race, socio-economic factors, and social determinants of health.

“At Sisters Hospital, we understand that the right way to care is to listen and collaborate with our community at a grassroots level, and today is an example of what can be achieved through partnership and dialogue,” said **Meghan Aldrich, President of Sisters of Charity Hospital and its St. Joseph Campus**. “This new Center empowers women to have important conversations with doulas to ensure they are receiving whole-person care throughout their pregnancies - physically, emotionally, and spiritually. We are thrilled to open the doors to our Maternal Health Equity Center and build upon the exceptional mother-baby care Sisters Hospital is known for.”

Sisters Hospital delivers 3000 babies annually. Should a mother or baby need a higher level of care, the hospital features an adult Intensive Care Unit (ICU) and Level III Neonatal Intensive Care Unit (NICU) for babies as young as 23 weeks.

“Providing the best access to care for all mothers and babies in our community will always be our top priority,” said **Dr. Anthony Pivarunas, Chief of Women’s Services for Catholic Health**. “The services offered in this new center will link higher-risk mothers and mothers to be with needed services that will lead to more positive health outcomes, for both mother and child.”

The new Center partners women with a “Doula Navigator” who will provide emotional, informational, and physical support before, during, and after they give birth. Through this hands-on, individualized approach, expecting mothers will be linked to services and screenings designed to improve health outcomes for both moms and babies. Doula coverage is now a permanent part of Medicaid statewide, significantly increasing access to essential support for families across New York State

“This program stems from the passion I have for mothers and my belief that every woman deserves a beautiful birth experience,” said **Shannon Johns, CEO of Calming Nature Doula**. “I envision this center as a nurturing space where mothers will find respectful, culturally inclusive support— where every mother feels valued and cared for and will serve families for generations to come.”

“Every person deserves to understand what is happening when they receive medical care,” said **Christina Lewis, Manager of Clinical Education for Women’s Services**. “Adding the Health Equity Center and its services will allow us to help make that happen for families who might otherwise have challenges navigating the system or face barriers that are easier to overcome as a community instead of an individual.”

Every person deserves to understand what is happening when they receive medical care. Adding the Birth Equity Center and its services will allow us to help make that happen for families who might otherwise have challenges navigating the system or face barriers that are easier to overcome as a community instead of an individual.

Programming at the center is made possible with funds received from the City of Buffalo, the American Rescue Plan Act and Sisters Hospital Foundation.

For more information on the Maternal Healthy Equity Center, please visit chsbuffalo.org/maternal-health-equity-center.

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About Sisters of Charity Hospital

Established in 1848, Sisters of Charity Hospital is Buffalo's first hospital. Today, with its St. Joseph Campus in Cheektowaga, NY, the 310-bed hospital, which is part of Catholic Health, offers a full range of medical, surgical and ambulatory care services to the Western New York community. An area leader in women's services, Sisters Hospital offers an array of obstetric and gynecological services, including advanced minimally invasive GYN surgery and a Level III Neonatal Intensive Care Unit (NICU). The hospital features services for the entire family, including 24-hour emergency care; cardiac care; stroke care; a large primary care network, which includes adult and pediatric services; an 80-bed skilled nursing facility; and one of the area's leading vascular surgery programs. With three offsite clinics, Sisters Hospital is also one of the largest providers of outpatient substance use treatment services in New York State.

About Calming Nature Doula

Calming Nature Doula Services & Center offers a dedicated team of Certified and Community Birth Doulas, Postpartum Doulas, and Childbirth Educators who provide physical, emotional, and motivational support to expectant families in the Western New York area. Our mission is to offer comfort measures and pain management during childbirth, while also delivering comprehensive education, resources, and referrals throughout pregnancy and the postpartum period.