

Dear Oregon Legislators,

According to CDC data, women in the United States have the highest rates of maternal mortality among developed countries. The most significant reason for this is overall lack of accessible midwife care. While the US has similar numbers of Ob-gyns to other developed countries, we have about a tenth the number of midwives. This is often because insurers like OHP make it difficult to access and bill for midwifery care, particularly in Birth Centers and at home births.

While Ob-gyn births are necessary in high-risk cases, the vast majority of normal births do not benefit from such expensive care. In addition, Ob-gyn attended births in the US result in high-risk operations, particularly cesarean sections, at much higher rates than in any other developed countries. The result is 32% of US births are by C-section, more than double many other developed countries and double the WHO recommended rate of 10-15%. These births are 80% more likely to have resulting complications. Research even indicates that cesarean sections in the US are more likely to occur around 5pm in the evening, and especially on Friday evenings, right when overworked physicians are hoping for a normal weekend. This is not in the patient's best interest.

Birth is a major life transition for many women who are often excited, scared, overwhelmed and even depressed pre- and post-partum. Midwives have the time, energy and simply the proper training to ease women through this important transition with more personal visits, more frequent visits and more time spent at the birth and at visits before and after. This is the foundation of strong families. A stressful, expensive, complicated birth is no way to start otherwise healthy Oregon families off on the right foot. For these reasons, I urge you to vote in support of HB2388 to reduce healthcare costs in Oregon, to increase access to midwifery care, and to save the lives of many Oregon mothers.

Thank you,
Kara Schnoes, Eugene