

Dear Chair Prusak and the Members of the House Health Committee,

Thank you for your time and consideration today. My name is Meredith Mance, and I am a resident of and small business owner in McMinnville, Oregon. I am a Certified Professional Midwife, Licensed Direct Entry Midwife, and Internationally Board Certified Lactation Consultant. I also serve as a board member on the Oregon Health Authority's Board of Direct Entry Midwifery, which governs the direct-entry midwifery profession in our state.

I'm writing today in support of HB 2388, which will require insurers to cover community birth, based on a fair negotiation of actual costs. This bill will increase access to midwifery care throughout the state.

Current evidence shows us that the United States has the single highest rate of preventable death in childbirth of any developed nation, as well as the sixth highest c-section rate in the world. In 2018, there were 17.4 maternal deaths for every 100,000 births, which is more than double the rates of countries like England and France, and over 10 times the rate in New Zealand and Norway (Source: World Health Organization). The biggest difference between these healthcare systems and our own is access to midwifery care, which is more personalized, individualized, and has shown to improve maternal and infant outcomes when integrated into the medical system.

I grew up in a Mexican-American family, where diabetes is the norm and high blood pressure is often a given come adulthood. I've seen the devastating health effects of these types of diseases, as well as the insurmountable costs they bring to families, insurance companies, and taxpayers alike. However, our overall health begins as early as the womb, where access to good prenatal care and holistic health guidance can have lasting, long-term health effects on the population as a whole. How we care for our developing fetuses can dictate their future disposition towards things like heart and lung disease, or even their metabolic function and insulin resistance. Ultimately, healthier pregnancies lead to a healthier population.

Currently, I am one of only a small handful of midwives who provide this type of individualized, evidence-based care in Yamhill County, and the only one fluent in Spanish. Additionally, McMinnville only has one hospital, which has a mere 3 labor and delivery suites, making access to care difficult and often requires families in my district to travel to Portland or Salem to access the healthcare they need. Often, these families rely on their midwives from everything from nutritional counseling to family planning to routine cervical cancer screenings. Since many insurance companies do not cover midwifery care, many families must find ways to personally finance their births or prenatal care, or forgo their initial plans and wishes altogether. All too often, we midwives take a steep pay cut in order to accommodate as many families as possible which, quite frankly, is not sustainable for anyone.

While this bill may face opposition from insurance companies, it is important to note that ultimately, choosing to support midwifery care will save money for both the insurance companies and the taxpayer. Currently, the average, uncomplicated, vaginal delivery in Oregon costs approximately \$9000, not including labwork, ultrasounds, prenatal care, or even an epidural. Add in these costs, and we're pushing \$20,000 per birth, which can be tripled if a cesarean is required (Scientific American, 2019: <https://blogs.scientificamerican.com/sa-visual/the-cost-of-giving-birth-in-the-u-s/> ). Meanwhile, the average cost for a midwifery-managed pregnancy and birth in Oregon is \$5000 to \$6000. Requiring insurance companies to cover community-based birth options and midwifery care offers these companies a way to cover a more affordable option that has been proven to mitigate long-term, high-cost health problems. Supporting HB2388 will not only help families access the healthcare they desire and need, but it will also give Oregonians a chance to lower our abysmally high rates of childbirth mortality while saving money for both insurance companies and taxpayers alike. Please consider supporting HB2388 this session!

I appreciate your time and consideration to this matter. Please vote yes on HB 2388 to ensure that all Oregon families have access to this type of care.

Sincerely,

Meredith Mance, CPM, LDM, IBCLC  
Wilder Midwifery  
2108 NE Baker St, McMinnville, OR 97128  
213.448.2355 or 503.495.3266