

Dear Chair Prusak and Members of the House Health Committee,

I am a mother, nurse and midwife from Australia, and I had my son at home with midwives in Portland, Oregon. I am writing to ask you to vote yes on HB 2388 to improve access to midwifery care. It is well documented that continuity of care provided by midwives is the gold standard of care for childbearing women. The 2014 lancet series into improving global maternal health recommended that increasing access to midwifery care and allowing midwives to work to their full scope of practice would ensure a more efficient use of resources and improve maternal and infant outcomes (Renfrew et al., 2014).

Through my professional background working as a nurse midwife in Australia, where midwifery care is standard for low-risk women, I have seen the benefits it provides women and how women centered care not only reduces complications but increases breastfeeding rates and supports emotional health. Additionally, midwifery care and out of hospital birth is safe for low-risk women and significantly decreases healthcare costs. Improving access to midwifery care in Oregon by increasing insurance coverage and appropriate reimbursement of midwives will improve health equity as many low-income women are often covered by the Oregon Health Plan. Reimbursing providers adequately and increasing coverage will allow more vulnerable women to receive midwifery care that they would potentially benefit from. As a recent immigrant who accessed midwifery care and home birth through OHP having midwifery care during my pregnancy was invaluable. Being new to the health system and community, having care that was holistic and truly supportive of my needs was integral to my confidence as a new mother and my birthing experience.

I would have not been able to financially access home birth if it weren't for coverage under OHP. However, it was very difficult for me to find a provider who accepted my insurance, and I was told many times that midwives weren't adequately reimbursed and it was not financially viable to accept my insurance. I was lucky enough to find my midwives, but they are one of the few providers of OHP covered home birth in Portland. I desperately wanted to have midwifery care and a home birth, but I was afraid that I wouldn't be able to due to financial barriers. My midwives provided care that was women centered and safe. I have experience working in hospital based midwifery care for low and high risk women and my midwives were extremely knowledgeable and diligent in monitoring for potential risk factors and were not afraid to refer me to an obstetrician for an opinion or care if required.

Please vote yes on HB 2388 so that all Oregon families have access to midwifery care and ensure sustainability of the midwifery model in Oregon. Thank you for the work you do to support the health of mothers and babies.

Kind regards,
Virginia Hooper (RN)
Portland, Oregon, 97212

Reference

Renfrew, M., Ateva, E., Dennis-Antwi, J. A., Davis, D., Dixon, L., Johnson, P., ... & Zeck, W. (2019). Midwifery is a vital solution: what is holding back global progress?. *Birth*, 46(3), 396-399.