

Dear Chair Prusak and Members of the House Health Committee,

I am writing to you today regarding HB 2388. These issues are important to me both professionally and personally. As a family law attorney, I have had many clients who did not have coverage for alternative birthing options and ended up receiving cesarian section deliveries. These families had not originally wanted to have cesarian deliveries, which caused both delay in recovery from birth, prolonged issues regarding weight loss, and postpartum depression. Unfortunately, I have seen these complications pose a strain on parties' relationships, and they often end up separating or divorcing. Professionally I support this bill because I believe it will give families the freedom to choose their own birthing journeys and ultimately lead to healthier familial relationships.

Personally, I support this bill because I am a mother of two young children. My first experience with midwifery care occurred four years ago. At that time, I had just graduated from law school and was not yet employed. I wanted to have a birth where I was empowered to make educated decisions regarding my care, but that freedom of choice came at a high cost. My insurance did not cover any prenatal care, nor did they cover my post-natal care. I ultimately gave birth in a hospital under the care of a midwife, and only a portion of those fees were covered. My first birth was complicated, but I was still able to have the birthing experience I had hoped for, which limited interventions such as cesarian section.

My second child was born in 2020 during the pandemic. Before the lockdown began, I had thought I would give birth in a hospital in order to avoid the additional out of pocket costs associated with a home birth. I quickly realized that option would not be the best choice for my family because there were new limitations on familial support members who were permitted at a hospital birth. My family made the decision to assume the out-of-pocket costs, in addition to our \$1,000 per month insurance premiums, so we could have a birth at home with close family in the adjacent room. I had a non-complicated pregnancy and birth at home in September 2020. My recovery following birth was smooth and I was able to return to work full time in January 2021. The costs associated with my birth outside of the hospital were substantially less than what I paid for my son, but none of those costs were covered by my insurance.

Given the pandemic crisis which began in 2020, it has become apparent that women need more options besides hospitals for giving birth. It is not possible for many women to choose a health care plan which covers their desired services, especially when those plans are determined by their employment or their spouse's employment. There are certain situations and pregnancies where it makes more sense for a family to choose a birth center or home birth. These types of birthing scenarios save money because they are substantially cheaper than those births which occur in a hospital setting. They also allow families to avoid potential exposure to the COVID-19 virus, which is still an ongoing crisis.

I appreciate you taking the time to read both my personal and professional opinions regarding HB 2388. Your support of this bill will provide a freedom for each family to choose the birthing options that are appropriate for their individual needs.

Thank you,



Elizabeth I. Elkington