

Dear Chair Prusak and Members of the House Health Committee,

My name is Jacquelynn Kirihara, I am a Naturopathic Physician, student midwife, and mother of my daughter who was born at home in downtown Portland eight months ago. Please vote yes on HB 2388 so that the mothers I work with can have insurance coverage for the safe and cost-effective care I will provide in the near future. I have attended over 50 births that have taken place in homes around the state, as well as supported mothers birthing in hospitals around the Portland area. Midwives provide excellent, wholistic, and safe care. While I am partial to the home birth experience for low-risk mothers, the care I have been able to observe of midwives in a hospital setting is so meaningful to the birthing mothers. As a Naturopathic Physician, I fully understand and respect my Medical Doctor peers, and feel strongly that their place in our health care system is crucial for high-risk scenarios as well as in emergency care needs.

Throughout my time as a student midwife, I have discussed the financial barriers extensively with to-be parents who often express disappointment, frustration and a strong desire to gain access to the type of care they feel most comfortable with. Pregnancy, labor & delivery and postpartum is part of the most vulnerable periods of time in a woman's life. During these moments, experiencing fear, anxiety, or neglect can lead to detrimental birth outcomes, in addition to potentially severe postpartum effects. In the spring of 2020, I was working with a home-birth midwife who met with a woman who was determined to have an unattended birth. While financial barriers were definitely present, her reasoning was based in a variety of past experiences of misogyny and instances where she felt her needs were dismissed within her previous health care. Thankfully, this mother invited us to provide immediate postpartum and newborn care to ensure safety. We were also involved in providing education in preparation for the birth and some (very delayed) prenatal care.

Overall, I believe that mothers who feel a connection, support, and feel heard when engaging with their provider will have better birth outcomes in the need of interventions and with their perception of their experience. Knowing that HB 2388 would increase access to midwifery care for Oregon families whether they choose to give birth in hospital, birth center, or at home with Licensed Direct-Entry Midwives, Certified Nurse Midwives, or Naturopathic Physicians, provides me hope for better birth outcomes for more families. Childbirth is a time to empower women, not to dismiss their needs, but to support them in this pivotal moment of their lives.

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

Sincerely,

Jacquelynn Kirihara, ND