

February 25th, 2021

From: Jessica M. Harrison, PhD(c) LCSW

Re: Support of HB 2388

To Whom It May Concern:

my name is Jessica Harrison and I live in Portland. I have worked as a perinatal mental health clinician in our community since 2008, and I am a social scientist who researches perinatal healthcare. I also had homebirth midwifery care through my pregnancy and the birth of my child.

Through my research of midwifery and obstetric care, plus my personal experience, I have gained tremendous clarity about the importance of increasing access to midwifery care in multiple locations (e.g. homes, birth centers, and hospitals). Everyone in our communities should be able to determine where and by whom they receive care and count on these services being paid for by their insurance.

The history of obstetrics in the United States has led to a widely-accepted belief that hospitals are where births must occur. Importantly, this is a social norm and cultural ideal, not a factually supported assessment. In fact, a majority of pregnancies and births are low-risk and can be safely and holistically attended by community-based midwives (CPM/LM) and certified nurse midwives (CNM). Research has established positive health outcomes associated with midwifery care in the U.S. Additionally, research increasingly underscores that hospitals are not necessarily the safest birthing environments, and this is especially true for minority people—in the U.S. where over 98% of births take place in hospitals, maternal mortality has *increased* by over 26% in the past 20 years, and mortality rates are 3-4 times higher for Black women.

It is time for the United States, including our state of Oregon, to establish new, evidence-based trends for perinatal healthcare. With this bill, Oregon has an opportunity to hold insurance companies accountable to 1) provide fair choice for all people to choose the best perinatal healthcare for their families and 2) pay midwives for their hard work, no matter where they attend births. This is one step toward dismantling an unnecessary and harmful hierarchy of health professions, one where the care provided by doctors and hospitals is privileged, despite mounting evidence that midwifery care (in and out of hospitals) is a safe (and less expensive) option that can improve outcomes for birthing people.

HB 2388 is a step toward improving health outcomes for Oregonians and legitimizing midwifery as essential, high quality perinatal healthcare.

Sincerely,

Jessica M. Harrison