

February 25, 2021

House Committee on Health Care
900 Court St. NE
Salem, Oregon 97301

Re: Opposition to HB 2388

Chair Prusak, Vice-Chair Salinas, Vice-Chair Hayden, and Members of the Committee:

As a Registered Nurse at a hospital Labor & Delivery unit and a nursing school faculty, I am writing to you in strong opposition to HB 2388. I recognize the importance of collaboration among different healthcare professionals, including doulas, providers, nurses, and midwives. I also recognize the importance of increasing access to safe and positive birth experiences and outcomes. However, this bill is not the answer. HB 2388 lacks what I believe is the cornerstone of healthcare safety—standardized policies, certification, education, training, and evidence-based practice.

As a labor and delivery nurse in the hospital, I have numerous stories of patients being transferred from out-of-hospital care to our unit with negative outcomes for both mom and baby. Pregnancy and birth are complex processes. Many negative outcomes result from sudden and unexpected situations that can happen to both low-risk and high-risk patients. In these emergency situations, timing to intervention is essential. However, what concerns me more are poor outcomes that could have been prevented by adequate knowledge and training.

One story specifically comes to mind. I had a patient who was transferred to the hospital from a home-birth setting due to prolonged labor and the patient desiring pain medication. When she arrived at the hospital, the complexity of the situation became apparent. The patient had developed an infection and her baby was in distress. This infection could have been diagnosed hours prior and appropriate care could have been given and a positive outcome could have resulted. Instead, the patient required an emergency C-section. The baby required care in the neonatal intensive care unit (NICU) and then transfer to a higher-level NICU. After the birth, the patient and family confided in me that they chose a home birth because the patient was scared of the hospital. She told me that she was so grateful to us and that if she had to do it again, she would either deliver in the hospital or find a provider who had more training and experience.

Yes, we need to ensure safe and positive birth outcomes for all patients. Yes, we need to meet the diverse needs of the community and address social determinants of health. HB 2388 is not how we do this. Instead, we need to focus on standardizing education and training of providers and birth practices, improve the quality of and access to prenatal care and education, and rely on evidence-based practices to improve outcomes.

Sincerely,

Kelsie Powell, MSN, RNC-OB