

OMC

Oregon Midwifery Council

PO Box 5056 • Salem OR • 97304

www.OregonMidwiferyCouncil.org

February 14, 2023

RE: HB 2617

Chair Nosse and members of the House Committee on Behavioral Health and Health Care,

I am writing on behalf of the Oregon Midwifery Council to ask you to support HB 2617 which would remove financial barriers to essential newborn screening for those families who pay for the screening out-of-pocket.

The Oregon Midwifery Council is the professional organization for midwives who attend home births and birth center births in Oregon. We care for many families who pay directly for their care either because they are uninsured or, more commonly, because their insurance does not cover their midwife, home birth, or birth center services. Approximately 33% of families planning a home birth or birth center birth in Oregon pay for their care directly, without insurance payment. The 2022 fee increase from \$80 to \$175 for newborn screening in Oregon has had a major impact on these families and midwives have seen more families refusing newborn screening than at any time previously in their careers. Without financial assistance for families who pay directly for their care this fee increase, and future fee increases as more diseases are added to the newborn bloodspot screening panel, will decrease access to newborn bloodspot screening in Oregon.

HB 2617 would ensure that all Oregon families are able to access newborn bloodspot screening without financial barrier. It would also provide relief to the midwife and birth center small businesses who order and pay for these kits upfront before they are reimbursed by the families they care for. As an example, a small home birth practice with just 2 employees attending 6 births went from paying \$480 a month to \$1,050 a month for newborn screening kits when the fee increased in 2022.

The Northwest Regional Newborn Bloodspot Screening Program has an existing fee waiver for the screening kit for uninsured, low-income families but that addresses only a small portion of the families affected by fee increases. HB 2617 is needed to close the gap and remove financial barriers to newborn bloodspot screening for all Oregon newborns.

Newborn screening is meant to be universal screening, reaching every newborn in Oregon. Without HB 2617 newborn bloodspot screening fee increases will compromise the goal of universal screening. The Oregon families, midwives, and small businesses most-affected by fee

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increases cannot bear a cost increase that more than doubled the expense of this important and life-saving screening and need your support.

Thank you for your consideration,

Silke Akerson, MPH, CPM, LDM

Oregon Midwifery Council
