

Good afternoon, Chair Fahey, Vice Chairs Bresse-Iverson and Kropf,

My name is Jennifer Suarez. I am an Emergency Department Charge Nurse at Legacy Mount Hood Medical Center, where I started my career nearly a decade ago. I am here to provide testimony in favor of House Bill 3592. I believe this bill is critical to ensuring access and care for all pregnant people based on what I have experienced during the closure of Legacy Mount Hood's Birthing Center.

Just weeks ago, Legacy Mt Hood Medical Center made the announcement that they were going to close Gresham's only Family Birth Center. Since then, Legacy's administration has described their plans to provide care to patients without the Center. Unfortunately, their plan is wholly inadequate.

We have been told by administration that laboring patients who are less than five centimeters dilated will be rerouted to Randall Children's Hospital nearly 20 miles away. For patients in rural communities, that means that their total travel time is nearly an hour and a half in circumstances where even a few minutes can mean life or death.

However, many of our patients are not easily able to go to Randall's because they do not have access to adequate transportation. Finding someone to transport them, calling an ambulance or taxi, or utilizing public transportation further complicates patients' plight and impedes their ability to receive timely and sometimes lifesaving care.

In circumstances where patients are not medically stable enough to transport themselves, administration has said that they will utilize ambulances and LifeFlight. However, ambulance services are consistently unavailable throughout Multnomah County. LifeFlight is also inaccessible: the average cost of this type of emergent transport is, on average, \$40,000, and LifeFlight can also be limited by inclement weather and availability.

Patients who are more than five centimeters dilated and fully effaced cannot be transported at all. Administration has said that those patients will give birth in the Emergency Department. The ED is not a suitable environment for a laboring patient, nor does it have the physical capacity, as it is currently our practice to treat many ED patients in the lobby and often in hallways.

Our emergency department also lacks expertise as it relates to obstetrical emergencies and surgeries. According to the National Institute of Health, it takes 10,000 hours to become an expert in any given medical specialty. The nurse and doctors of Legacy Mount Hood are receiving a total of 16 hours of classroom training to prepare.

Additionally, the Emergency Department does not have the necessary tools, such as fetal monitoring equipment. Without this knowledge of fetal stability, doctors cannot provide appropriate pain medications: there will not be access to anesthesiology for epidurals or in preparation of emergency Cesarean sections. Ultimately, we do not have the skill set,

specialized professionals or equipment necessary for healthy outcomes. Birthing patients and babies will die without these vital components of treatment.

These experiences as a charge nurse illustrate the importance and necessity of maternal services. I believe strongly that the closure of Legacy Mt Hood's Family Birth Center would have been prevented had an equity analysis been in place. I implore you to support House Bill 3592.

Thank you.