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On Behalf Of:  
Committee: House Committee On Behavioral Health and Health Care  
Measure, Appointment or Topic: HB2959

My name is Wendi Lahodny and I am a life long Oregonian and resident in Clackamas County.

This is a personal plead to pass HB 2959 this session – Oregonians wanting to build their families have been waiting far too long for access to the vital family building health care services in HB 2959. 1 in 6 Oregonians currently struggle with infertility, and passage of HB 2959 will mean that more people can start and grow their families.

My husband Shawn and I struggled to build our family on our own for 3 years before we decided it was time for some modern medicine interventions through ivf.

Shawn is a Firefighter/Paramedic and I am a postpartum registered nurse. Most employers' insurance benefits do not cover anything labeled "infertility". They will cover the diagnostics leading up to the diagnosis of infertility, but once you have the label of infertility then everything, it seems, becomes an out-of-pocket cost. We started with the IUI process in hopes that the least out of pocket cost would produce the best result. However, after several unsuccessful cycles and discovering one large medication allergy, we were encouraged to start IVF. After reviewing the financials for this journey, we decided at that time the financial burden was too much for us.

Shawn and I knew a couple that traveled abroad for IVF treatment, and they came back pregnant with twins! Their story was a glimmer of hope as they shared with us the financial commitment was far less than what we faced locally. The sad truth was, we could go to Europe with treatments, travel, lodging and recreation 2-3 times before we reached the cost of one IVF cycle here in Oregon. We made the decision to move forward with this plan, booking tickets for March 2020, lodging, sightseeing adventures between treatments and waited for our journey to begin.

Then, COVID!

After recovering emotionally from the disappointments of Covid we ultimately decided to go back to ivf locally and take out a home line of credit.

We endured many ups and downs in the IVF chapter of this journey, and we found ourselves back at square one in early 2022, seemingly worse off than when we started with numerous complications and multiple failed embryo transfers. The financial and mental burden was heavy as we tried to navigate the next steps of building our family. Anxiety and depression crept into my medical diagnostic dashboard at this point as we grappled with the financial commitments we had already endured and what we knew we still faced ahead.

There are employers out there that are known for having IVF coverage. Starbucks, Amazon, Apple, Google- just to name a few. At this point I was considering going per diem or part time at the hospital and working as a barista at Starbucks or a nurse for

Amazon simply for the insurance benefits. Even as a part time Starbucks employee you can get IVF benefits. I want you to understand that building a family of our own was such a dream and passion to us I was willing to change my dream career path all because the financial strain was too much for us to continue responsibly.

But what if there was standards of care for this population? For us, struggling to create a family of our own naturally.

This is where Housebill 2959 can ease the burdens on families struggling to conceive and grow their families in Oregon. Not only is HB 2959 easing the financial burdens but the physical and emotional stress and health of these Oregonians.

I hope Oregon will join the 24 other states across the nation that help hardworking families get access to these medically necessary treatments. Had HB 2959 been in affect when my husband and I navigated our family building journey, the timeline, the financial burden, the mental health issues may have not had such an impact on our marriage and our lives by the time we were able to bring our son Brantley into our family in 2023.

Please support Oregon families by moving this pro-family bill forward. Thank you!

Wendi Lahodny