

Hello my name is Wendy Scharp. I began my doula practice in 2003 and have proudly been an Oregon doula since 2006. First living in Southern Oregon and then relocation to Portland in 2013. In 2013, I advanced my practice by becoming a Doula Trainer to help others get involved in the doula profession. I am here in strong support of SB 1167 to fund birthing villages in Oregon.

This bill is essential because currently the lack of BIPOC doulas and maternity providers in Oregon is startlingly low. Through research we know that culturally specific care has a greater impact on the community. Having a doula at your birth has been shown to lower rates of preterm birth, low birth weight, and cesarean sections, while also increasing positive birth experiences and breastfeeding initiation. Pregnancy-related mortality rates among American Indian and Alaska Native (AIAN) and Black women are over three times higher than the rate for White women (63.4 and 55.9 vs. 18.1 per 100,000).

As a doula trainer I am contacted on a regular basis by BIPOC community members seeking scholarships to attend my OHA Approved Birth Doula Workshops. However, scholarships are very limited and run out very quickly. As a doula billing hub and agency owner I struggle to match BIPOC families with culturally specific doulas due to the low number of experienced BIPOC Doulas in my community. Of the 25 OHA Approved THW Doulas I have contracted with at Doula Love in the Portland Metro area we only have 4 OHA Approved THW BIPOC Doulas. This is not due to a lack of interest but due to a lack of resources available to train members of the BIPOC Community.

Birthing villages can help by:

- Providing culturally competent, community-led care
- Reducing maternal and infant mortality through early intervention
- Offering holistic prenatal and postpartum support
- Addressing racial disparities in maternal health
- Creating jobs for birth workers and healthcare providers

I strongly urge you to pass SB 1167 to ensure families have access to safe, dignified maternity care and to show our BIPOC Community in Oregon that we see them and we support them. Thank you for your time.