

Submitter: Sarah Kester

On Behalf Of:

Committee: Senate Committee On Early Childhood and Behavioral Health

Measure, Appointment or Topic: HB2901

RE: Strong Support for HB 2901 – Expanding Safe Haven Protections in Oregon

Dear Chair and Members of the Committee,

I am writing in strong support of House Bill 2901, which expands Oregon's Safe Haven protections to allow newborn safety devices—commonly called "baby boxes"—to be installed at authorized facilities throughout the state. This bill offers a humane, life-saving option for parents in crisis and protects the health and safety of vulnerable infants.

As access to abortion and contraception is increasingly restricted, HB 2901 fills a critical gap by providing overwhelmed parents with a compassionate and anonymous path to surrender—free from criminalization or shame. It is a necessary safeguard in a changing reproductive landscape.

Importantly, HB 2901 also helps prevent the trauma, injury, or death that can result from unsafe abandonment. But we must go further—we must also reckon with the lifelong impact of identity loss for the children affected. Infants surrendered anonymously may grow up with no knowledge of their origins, medical history, or cultural background. They are at risk of growing up without access to vital pieces of who they are—an experience that adoptees across this country have long struggled to rectify.

There are also urgent legal and civil rights questions we must face. How will the state ensure that these children are issued birth certificates that clearly establish citizenship? As nationalism and anti-immigrant rhetoric continue to shape federal discourse, we must anticipate the possibility of future policies that scrutinize identity papers or deny services based on ambiguous or incomplete documentation. We cannot allow a child, surrendered through a legal, state-sanctioned process, to later be placed at risk of deportation, statelessness, or denial of citizenship due to a lack of origin records.

HB 2901 is a necessary step—but it must be paired with robust protocols that protect these children's long-term rights, including access to their birth records (when possible), legal proof of U.S. citizenship, and inclusion in policies that support adoptees' right to identity.

We can't fully prevent every crisis, but we can respond with care, foresight, and justice. I urge you to pass HB 2901 and begin the work of building a safer, more compassionate system for both parents and the children they surrender.

With respect and deep concern for our future generations,

Sarah Kester  
Keizer, Oregon