

## Testimony for Ways and Means Education Subcommittee Hearing 5/8/2013

Dear Members of The Ways and Means Education Subcommittee,  
My name is Bridget Carnahan, I'm a licensed midwife and the legislative liaison for the Oregon Midwifery Council. I am here to testify in support of House Bill 2997. This bill has the potential to significantly improve midwifery care in the state of Oregon by requiring that all direct entry midwives be licensed and regulated.

The co-sponsors of this bill Representatives Keny-Guyer and Parrish convened a work group of experts that included leading Oregon obstetricians, nurse midwives, and direct entry midwives to design a licensure bill that would find a balance between many opposing perspectives. The workgroup met numerous times over the summer and fall and spent hours considering what should be included in this legislation. HB 2997 is the product of this thoughtful and thorough effort. The workgroup and the legislative process have required a huge commitment of time and energy and we are thankful to the co-sponsors and all the workgroup participants. This legislation is simple, functional, and truly represents a middle ground in what has been an intensely polarized issue. We are very hopeful that it will be enacted.

A critical aspect of the bill is a licensure exemption for traditional midwives. This exemption was designed by the workgroup to protect the cultural practices of traditional midwives who provide an age old, non-medical type of midwifery care. While the number of midwives practicing in this traditional manner is probably fewer than 10 individuals, the workgroup recognized that criminalizing them would have a negative impact on the already marginalized, mainly immigrant communities that traditional midwives are part of. As direct entry midwifery becomes increasingly professionalized we must proceed with caution so as not to jeopardize the survival of these traditional midwifery practices that have been carried forward since early humanity. The purpose of the exemption from licensure was to safeguard these traditional customs.

We are concerned that an amendment has been proposed which would place a sunset date on the exemption. This would completely defeat the purpose of the exemption which was to provide ongoing protection. For this reason the Oregon Midwifery Council asks that no amendment be made to HB 2997 which places a sunset date on the traditional midwife licensure exemption. We ask you to please maintain the integrity of this bill that was established with so much diligence and collaboration.

Thank you for your consideration of this issue.  
Sincerely, Bridget Carnahan, Oregon Midwifery Council