

April 7, 2015

RE: HB 3451

Dear members of the House Committee on Health Care,

My name is Silke Akerson and I am testifying on behalf of the Oregon Midwifery Council which represents Direct-Entry Midwives in Oregon and promotes family-centered and evidence-based maternity care for all families in our state.

I encourage you to support House Bill 3451 which would provide fair reimbursement through OHP for care provided by midwives in Freestanding Birth Centers.

Out-of-Hospital birth, in a birth center or at home, with a trained midwife is a safe and cost-effective option for healthy women experiencing low risk pregnancies but it is not being reimbursed by OHP at a rate that is fair or even feasible for most birth centers and midwives.

Currently, Birth Centers, and midwives providing the equivalent care in the home setting, are operating at a loss when providing care to pregnant women covered by the Oregon Health Plan. A birth center, or an individual midwife, ends up being paid just \$2,328.68 for the entire course of care including approximately 10-12 prenatal visits, 24 hour on-call availability for the duration of the care, complete labor and delivery care, immediate postpartum care (both maternal and infant), and 6 weeks of postpartum care for mother and baby (usually 4-6 visits). The reimbursement for all supplies is just \$229.27 which does not fully cover the cost of medications, supplies, newborn screening test kits, etc. that must be on hand for each patient.

Freestanding Birth Centers and midwives want to serve low income families. We provide excellent coordinated care with a focus on health education. Our outcomes are unmatched; with high patient satisfaction, low preterm birth rates, low cesarean section rates, and very high breastfeeding rates. We provide great short and long term health benefits and cost savings to the Oregon Health Authority and deserve to be reimbursed fairly. HB 3451 begins to address this important issue and merits your full support.

Thank you for your consideration,

Silke Akerson, CPM, LDM

Oregon Midwifery Council