

Dear Chair Greenlick and Members of the House Health Committee,

I am the mother of two beautiful daughters (see picture attached) born at home under the care of licensed direct-entry midwives. I am writing today to urge you to vote yes on HB 2845 to improve access to midwifery care in Oregon. When our first daughter was born in Washington state, our insurance covered our prenatal, birth and postpartum care with our licensed direct-entry midwives. Here in Oregon, we had to pay out of pocket for midwifery care during our second pregnancy, even though we had health insurance.

I am one of the few of the healthy women cared for by direct-entry, licensed midwives who needed to transfer to the hospital. After my second daughter was born, my midwives diagnosed retained placenta and facilitated my transfer to the hospital for surgery. They did a brilliant job supporting our normal birth, and they helped us access medical care when our postpartum course deviated from normal. When a family is cared for by a midwife, costly hospital interventions are only employed when absolutely necessary, and the midwives know when the hospital is the place their clients need to be.

I live in Southern Oregon, outside of Medford in White City. I moved here to manage a midwife-run, free-standing birth center in Medford that closed down after five years of operation because pregnant women with Oregon Health Plan could not get coverage for out-of-hospital midwifery care. Families who wanted to be cared for by midwives ended up in the hospital, where their births were much more expensive for the state than they would have been in the birth center. Families on Oregon Health Plan didn't have the luxury of paying out of pocket for midwifery care, as I did. When the birth center did provide care for mamas with OHP, coverage was denied even though the midwives were practicing within the scope of their Oregon midwifery licenses. If a business provides too many services without getting paid, it can't survive. That is what happened to Trillium Waterbirth Center. Had HB 2845 been the law at that time, that birth center would still be providing families with individualized, family-centered care, and I would still have the job that brought me to Southern Oregon.

I urge you to pass this bill not only because justice demands that all families, regardless of income, be able to choose their birth attendant and place of birth, but also because it will allow midwives, who are typically women small-business owners, to flourish in Oregon. Making midwives accessible to everyone who wants to use them reduces costs and improves outcomes during the childbearing year. Please vote yes on HB 2845.

Respectfully,

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Ramona and Frances (born at home with midwives) with mom Alison.jpg