

Dear Chair Salinas and Members of the House Health Committee,

My name is Lucy French, and I am a student midwife in Portland. I'm writing to ask for your support for House Bill #2845, which would greatly increase access to safe & affordable midwifery care for all Oregon families.

Midwives provide safe, compassionate, patient-centered care to low risk women and families during the childbearing year. Our cesarean section and preterm birth rates are significantly lower than those of a physician's, and patients report higher levels of consumer satisfaction. Midwifery care is associated with lower rates of postpartum depression and higher rates of breastfeeding. When women give birth with midwives, they are at much lower risk of unnecessary interventions. This tends to lead to empowering birth experiences, which have the potential to set families up for confident parenting. I am passionate about my work, and urge you to learn as much as you can about how **an increase in access to midwifery care, even at the state level, could help to end the terrifying maternity health care epidemic that we are facing in this country. Voting yes on HB 2845 is a way to take part in solving this crisis.**

In addition to the benefits stated above, midwifery care also provides **large cost savings to insurers and health systems**. However, many families still can't access midwifery care because about half of Oregon insurers (both private and OHP) provide limited or no coverage for midwifery care in the birth center or home birth setting.

To me, it is disgraceful that thousands of families in Oregon are not able to choose the kind of health care that they want to receive during pregnancy & childbirth due to economic barriers. If HB 2845 passes, public and private insurance companies across the state will be mandated to provide coverage for families seeking midwifery care with all 3 types of midwives licensed in Oregon: Licensed, direct-entry midwives, certified nurse-midwives, and naturopathic doctors who practice as midwives.

This means: **1)** Families will no longer carry the burden of paying out of pocket for the services they desire and deserve to have, which often means going into debt or becoming financially unstable heading into parenthood; **2)** Families will be able to choose their provider type based on preference, connection, philosophy of care, and level of experience, without any kind of financial barriers dictating this decision making process; and **3)** Midwifery care will be accessible to people of all socioeconomic backgrounds in the state of Oregon, whether you are lower, middle, or upper class. It is critical that midwifery care is not just available to a privileged, white population. This bill will **begin to erase these barriers** and has the potential to lead us to a place of **greater reproductive justice**.

Please vote YES on HB 2845. Thank you for supporting reproductive choice for all Oregon families!

Gratefully,

Lucy French, student midwife

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