

OMC

Oregon Midwifery Council

5126 NE 20th Avenue • Portland OR • 97211

www.OregonMidwiferyCouncil.org

March 1, 2019

Dear Chair Salinas and members of the House Health Care Committee,

My name is Silke Akerson and I am the executive director of the Oregon Midwifery Council as well as a midwife with a home birth practice in Portland. I am asking for your support of HB 2845 to increase access to midwifery care for Oregon families, improving outcomes and reducing maternity care costs in our state. This bill is the result of over a year of meetings in a stakeholder work group convened by Representative Keny-Guyer with Oregon insurers, CCOs, midwives, birth centers, and the Oregon Health Authority and I feel confident that, due to their contributions, this is a sound bill that makes sense for families, insurers, and the health system.

Midwives in Oregon provide safe, excellent, and cost-effective care in hospital, birth center, and home birth settings. Midwifery care, in all three settings, improves outcomes for mothers and babies and leads to lower rates of preterm birth, low birth weight, and cesarean while greatly increasing rates of breastfeeding. All of these improvements in outcomes provide health benefits and cost-savings not just at the time of birth but across the life-span. There is a high demand for midwifery care in all three birth settings.

Oregon licenses three types of midwives: Certified Nurse Midwives (CNMs), Certified Professional Midwives (CPMs) who are licensed as Licensed Direct-Entry Midwives (LDMs), and Naturopathic Physicians with a Natural Childbirth Certificate (NDs). All three midwife types provide excellent care for the 4 percent of Oregon families who choose planned out-of-hospital birth. Planned out-of-hospital birth with midwives in Oregon is a safe option for low-risk mothers and babies and safety is further improved when midwives are integrated into maternity care systems. While CNM, CPM, and ND midwife training routes are distinct, all three paths to midwifery produce excellent practitioners and outcomes do not differ by midwife type. Different midwife types often work together in the same birth center or home birth practice.

Midwifery care in hospital, birth center, and home birth settings reduces costs for insurers and for the health care system as a whole. The cost of hospital birth in Oregon varies from about \$12,000 to \$30,000 depending on the birth while the total cost (including prenatal, birth and postpartum care) of a birth center is between \$5,000-10,000 and home birth is between \$3,000 and \$5,000. The 2018 CMS Strong Start for Mothers and Newborns study showed that birth center care for Medicaid recipients improved outcomes and cost \$2,010 less per mother-baby pair which represents a savings of over 2 million dollars for every 1,000 births. A 2007 Washington Department of Health study calculated that the cost savings to Washington Medicaid Fee-for-Service of planned out-of-hospital births was \$488,147 per two-year period.

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As you know, midwives provide excellent, safe, and cost-effective care and yet over half of Oregon insurers provide limited or no coverage for midwifery care in the birth center or home birth setting and many pay birth centers far below cost for their facility fee. There are a significant number of plans that provide no coverage for home birth or will only cover one of the three types of Oregon licensed midwives. Oregon midwives and birth centers have worked diligently for the past 5 years to negotiate with Oregon insurers and CCOs with little success. While there are plans in Oregon providing fair and adequate access to midwifery care, there are many more that will not consider covering or contracting with midwives due to misinformation or bias about midwives and out-of-hospital birth. In fact, a number of insurers have drastically decreased their facility fee payment to birth centers so that midwives are being paid thousands of dollars less than their cost per birth and some birth centers have closed and others are struggling to stay open as a result.

Currently many Oregon mothers and families don't have insurance coverage for basic, appropriate and evidence-based maternity care options. This means that midwifery care is inaccessible to low-income families who are shown to most benefit from midwifery care and middle-class families are often forced to pay out-of-pocket or have the very personal decision of place of birth and provider decided by their insurer. This bill would correct this situation and ensure that pregnant people in Oregon have access to maternity care options.

HB 2845 would:

1. Require Oregon insurers and CCOs to cover midwifery care in the hospital, birth center, and home setting with all three licensed midwife types.
2. Require Oregon insurers to pay birth centers a fair facility fee based on their actual costs and good faith negotiation standard.
3. Direct the Department of Business and Consumer Services to report to the legislature on the impact of the law by 2023.

HB 2845 would not:

1. Require insurers to contract with any licensed midwife
2. Prevent insurers from having robust credentialing requirements or guidelines for planned out-of-hospital birth.
3. Increase costs for Oregon insurers.

This bill has great support from consumers (90 supporters participated in a recent lobby day and met with 76 legislators asking them to support the bill) and is supported by Oregon Nurse Midwives, Certified Professional Midwives, and Naturopathic Physicians.

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Please vote yes on this simple solution to improve access to safe and affordable care for Oregon mothers and families.

I have attached a number of resources with further information and am available to answer any questions you have about this bill or about midwifery and planned out-of-hospital birth in Oregon.

Thank you for your consideration,

Silke Akerson, CPM, LDM
Oregon Midwifery Council

Attached Resources:

CMS Strong Start for Mothers and Newborns

Lancet Executive Summary on Midwifery

Out-of-Hospital Birth Safety Summary

OHA Report on Out-of-Hospital Births in Oregon 2012-2017

Midwife Credential Comparison

Midwifery Licensure and Discipline Program in Washington State: Economic Costs and Benefits
