

Monday, March 4, 2019

Dear Chair Salinas and Members of the House Health Committee,

I am an early childhood advocate and a new mother. My son was born at home eight weeks ago today, at the foot of the bed where I sit now with him napping in my lap. I am writing to ask you to vote yes on HB 2845 so that more expectant and new mothers have access to the birth choices that I did.

As an early childhood researcher with a background in cognitive science, I knew the importance of high quality prenatal care and a supportive birth environment, even before I got pregnant. I felt incredibly lucky that Oregon, especially the Portland area, has so many expertly trained midwives who practice in different locations: in hospitals, at birth centers, and for home births. My husband and I were privileged enough that cost was not a determining factor in our choice of where to have our baby – instead we could choose based where we felt like we would get the best care. After investigating all of the options, we decided to birth our baby at home with licensed direct-entry midwives. The consistent care with our midwives (meeting with the same professionals for each prenatal and postpartum visit, often for an hour or longer, as well as having them on call by text and phone for any questions) made a huge difference in how comfortable we felt throughout the whole process.

Home births and birth center births are less expensive than hospital births, and thus midwifery care provides large cost saving to insurers and health systems. Yet many families still can't access midwifery care because about half of Oregon insurers (both private and OHP) provide limited or no coverage for home birth or birth center midwifery care. The choice of midwifery care should not be limited to the privileged few who have the financial means to pay directly. **Midwifery care should be accessible to all.** HB 2845 would increase access to midwifery care for Oregon families whether they choose to give birth in the hospital, in a birth center, or at home with licensed direct-entry midwives, certified nurse midwives, or naturopathic physicians.

Please vote yes on HB 2845 so that all Oregon families have access to midwifery care. Thank you for the work you do to support the health of parents and babies.

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Mother of Xavier O'Rourke, born 1/7/19 at home

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