

Rep. Dacia Grayber Supporting Testimony for HB 4134

Good afternoon. For the record, my name is Dacia Grayber, and I am the State Representative for HD 35, Tigard and SW Portland. I am also proudly here to support this timely and important legislation of behalf of my two—and now three—constituents, Natalie, Jeff, and baby girl Newgard. And lucky me, I am also delighted to be a firefighter and paramedic in the district providing emergency medical services that serves Washington County and beyond. It's with these three lenses I am here before you today in support of HB 4134.

While this is a bit hard in a virtual session—and don't worry, I won't make you raise your hand—how many of you here today have ever experienced giving birth? Now, how many have done so during a pandemic? I want you to consider for a second the nerves and anticipation of this. You're 9+months pregnant with a vision and a plan, ready to embark on one of the most momentous occasions imaginable...

...And then I show up. With a fire truck and an ambulance. Now, I don't want to discount the extraordinary skill and capabilities of paramedics to deliver babies in the field; indeed; I have had the great joy of delivering 6 in my career. But now, things have escalated a little, and you (the laboring mother) are in an ambulance transport to the hospital for efficient and professional care... at least you're able to rest easy knowing at the other end of this ambulance ride, is your familiar delivery team and hospital.

...And then I tell you sorry, but that hospital is on divert. We're in a global pandemic, and there is literally no room at that inn, and no staffing to accommodate you. I wish I could tell you this was the rare occasion, but over the course of COVID 19, this has become the norm. It is now the increasing rarity that a hospital is *not* on divert.

And this isn't the worst of it. Besides your birth plan being changed at no fault or no decision of your own, before too long you are hit with a walloping bill for transport and out-of-network coverage, to the tune of thousands of dollars.

This is an egregious wrong. I am here before you as a legislator, firefighter, and mother to say that we can do better to protect our birthing people from surprise medical bills on top of an already stressful and momentous experience. Please support HB 4134 with a "yes" vote. Thank you for your time.