

Testimony for Oregon HB 2901

**Honorable Members of the House Committee on Early Childhood and Human Services,**

My name is Pamela Stenzel, and I am a founding member of the Board of Directors for Safe Haven Baby Boxes. I am a licensed counselor with a Master's degree in Marriage and Family Therapy and serve as the Director of the National Safe Haven Crisis Line (1-866-99BABY1). With over 30 years of experience counseling women facing unintended pregnancies, I have witnessed firsthand the challenges and fears these parents encounter.

Since the launch of the National Safe Haven Crisis Line in March 2016, we have received over **16,000 calls** and have assisted hundreds of parents in safely surrendering their newborns. I have personally handled many of these calls and continue to provide guidance and support to parents in crisis.

One of the most significant barriers to utilizing existing Safe Haven laws is **anonymity**. While current laws claim to provide confidentiality, they **do not guarantee true anonymity**. I recall one mother in Indiana who was terrified of a face-to-face surrender. Living in a rural area without access to a Safe Haven Baby Box, she had no choice but to call 911. When paramedics arrived, one of the responding firefighters turned out to be her former classmate—validating her deepest fears.

A review of **illegal abandonments** across the country reveals a common theme: **most parents wanted to do the right thing, but fear held them back**. Many placed their infants near Safe Haven surrender locations or in areas where they hoped the child would be found—too afraid of direct interaction with authorities. **Newborn safety devices**—tested, electronically monitored, and built into hospitals or fire stations—offer a **critical lifeline** for these parents.

Babies placed in these devices are retrieved and receive medical attention in under **five minutes**, ensuring their safety.

While our ultimate hope is that mothers in crisis receive the support they need, we must also ensure that **safe, legal surrender remains a viable option** for those facing desperation. A **dumpster, trash bin, or toilet is no place for an infant**—these women are crying out for help. **HB 2901 offers a compassionate solution**, providing a beacon of hope for families in crisis throughout Oregon.

I respectfully urge you to vote **HB 2901 as Ought to Pass**. Thank you for your time and thoughtful consideration.

**Sincerely,**

**Pamela Stenzel, M.F.T.**

National Safe Haven Action Coalition