

Chairwoman Manchester, Vice Chair Cutrona, Ranking Member Denson, and Members of the House Families, Aging, and Human Services Committee – thank you for the opportunity to provide proponent testimony on HB 496.

I am a mother. I have given birth twice: once in a hospital under a doctor of obstetrics, and once under the care of midwives in the safety of my home.

I absolutely preferred the midwifery care received during my second pregnancy to my experience with a medical practice and hospital stay during my first pregnancy. I felt more heard and safer with the midwives than I did the hospital staff. Hospital staff tried to rush me and pushed unnecessary stress into my first birth, so far as to leave me with lasting trauma from the experience. I felt much safer with the midwives. I lived in Minnesota when I became pregnant for the second time, and Minnesota is one of around 31 states where CPMs are legally allowed to practice. As such, I sought care from CPMs in a licensed and authorized birth center. They offered everything needed for prenatal care, birth, and postpartum, as well as a close partnership with the nearest hospital in case transfer was necessary. It was absolutely wonderful. When moving back to Ohio, I was very disappointed that such care was not readily available to me. I ended up finding midwives who I respect and trust with my life and the lives of my children, but with far more difficulties than encountered in Minnesota. HB 496 allowing midwives licensure in Ohio would mean women could receive ALL of their care from the midwives without having to find another sympathetic doctor to offer screening services, ultrasounds, medicines, labs, and potential hospital privileges. Needing to do all that extra work creates a burden on mothers, taking focus away from their well being and adding stress and anxiety in a time in which it is very important to manage stress and stay calm and patient. HB 496 would also mean that, in the unlikely event of an emergency, continuity of care would be preserved, which leads to far better outcomes for patients in all aspects of the medical field. "Traditional" prenatal care and hospital births are incredibly cost prohibitive, and HB 496 would allow families to start without the cloud of debt over their heads as home birth and midwifery care is a fraction of the price. Even with good insurance, the hospital bill for just the delivery of my first child was something like \$30,000.00, whereas the cost of all prenatal care, postpartum care, and the home birth with my second pregnancy was only \$7,000.00. While I felt safe with our midwives in their extensive knowledge and experience, I know many other people that are starting to seek out home births and midwifery care, and HB 496 would ensure that all the midwives my friends and family might use are properly trained and fully accountable for their safety.

All of these reasons and many more are why I am fully in support of HB 496.

Whitney Arnett