

Honorable Chairwoman Manchester, Vice Chairman Cutrona, Ranking Member Denson and Distinguished Members of the Families, Aging, and Human Services Committee, I thank you for allowing me to testify in Opposition of House Bill 496.

I am writing to request your support to preserve our current rights as birthing families to safely birth our babies at home without new legislation or mandates and regulations. The homebirthing community in Ohio does NOT NEED NOR DESIRE the mandatory licensure of midwives.

Since time began, woman's bodies have been designed and created to perform the miraculous work of birth.

The current laws regarding midwives in Ohio should be LEFT UNCHANGED to allow women and birthing families to practice safe, low-risk birth in the comfort of their own homes with a team of birth professionals of their choice. Layering new laws and regulations on top of the existing system only strips freedom from birthing mothers and midwives. This bill will severely and negatively impact the huge and growing homebirthing community in your state.

This issue effects us as homebirthing mothers, families, and local midwives most of all. **Birth is not a medical issue, nor is it a diagnosis. Birth is not a symptom of a problem needing medical intervention. Birth is a biologically normal process that a woman's body is specifically designed to complete all by itself.** We want to preserve our current homebirthing rights: we want to continue to choose which birth experts will attend our births. **We want to preserve the right to birth our babies in the safety of the homes we have made for them.** We want to continue to birth our single babies and multiples at home, to have home VBACs, the continued autonomy to accept or deny medical intervention, to continue to independently determine when or if we birth at a hospital, the right to refuse "routine" or unnecessary vaginal exams, etc.

We beseech you to avoid mandatory licensing so the mother and the skilled midwife, are making the executive decisions during the birth, NOT insurance companies and government entities. Licensed midwives are severely limited on who they take as clients and how they practice. This mandate would eliminate many expert midwives from the field - an incalculable loss for society as a whole. A woman's sense of control during labor is VITAL for the naturally-occurring birth hormones to flow abundantly. Homebirthers are passionate individuals, strong willed, educated, and voters. Representatives work for us, and represent us, we need to make them understand that

their constituents, us homebirthers, do not want mandatory licensing, we want to keep our homebirth rights.

This bill will drastically reduce the number of currently-practicing midwives, limit the scope of care they may provide, force unwanted and unnecessary interventions onto birthing mothers, and implement mandatory hospital transfers in many cases where it is unnecessary.

This Summer, I had my 2nd homebirth, supported by an amazing team of professional, passionate, and qualified midwives. This bill would effectively strip me of the right to work with the team I have come to know, trust, and love over the years of them caring for my babies and my family. Myself and many, many others are beseeching you: **PLEASE DO NOT ALLOW THIS BILL TO PASS.** I thank you from the bottom of my heart for your time and consideration. **I urge you to vote NO on House Bill 496.**

In urgent and respectful sincerity,
Michelle Chamberlain
Fairborn, Ohio