

Dear Committee,

In opposition to H.B. No. 496

My husband, first-born child and I had the most spiritual, peaceful, beautiful home-birth recently. We desired a free-birth(un-assisted), and sixteen hours into labor, we decided to call our midwife. She was here for the following four hours, until our baby was born. She was here for prayer, support, guidance and any help that we asked for. She encouraged me to move positions by doing the miles circuit, and that's what got our baby to move down to the birth canal. She never once touched me, hooked me up to anything, told me to push, forced me to lay in a certain position, didn't allow me to eat, told me how to birth- she allowed this Mama to listen to her body that created her baby to birth her baby. She cleaned up for us afterwards, made me warming food and drink, weighed and measured baby, watched as our baby latched to nurse immediately, took photos. We gained very close relationship with her throughout my pregnancy- through being part of her live seven-week course that she teaches on the female body, pregnancy, health and how to labor and birth our baby on our own, as well as five in-person visits that each lasted anywhere from two to five hours long, and she even visited us seven days postpartum to check in.

Female's bodies are not broken. Birth is not an emergency.

Midwives allow us mothers to be more at peace, remind us that God is fully in control and that He made female bodies to do this naturally, and encourage us throughout the most intense moment of our life. My family and I do not care if a midwife has a license- all that matters to us is that they have done their research on our female physiology and can help us learn and navigate the process of pregnancy and birth, the way it is intended. Our female minds go some place else while in labor, and we need our trusted midwives to keep us confident and honed in.

This world was created for community- we find that in our home where we feel safe, not in the hospital. It is absolutely inhumane to force a mother to deliver her child in front of strangers who do not have any relationship with her, while at the same time, them not believing that her body is made to do this and can do this. Birth is an incredibly sacred, vulnerable and normal event. Female bodies know how to go through pregnancy and birth on their own. We never went near a hospital during my entire pregnancy or birth, because I did not have any emergent complications.

We have become so unfamiliar with the function of our bodies, and we think that we need someone else to tell us the right decisions to make and what is best for us and our bodies. I am informed of my options, and this Mama has a choice. I will forever birth my babies un-assisted in our own home, than to go to a hospital. If this bill is passed, a lot of us mothers will go through labor and delivery more brave than ever in order to have a home birth. This will not stop, discourage or scare us from doing what is right for our bodies, babies and families.

If you have to look up the words, "female physiology" or cannot describe all of the functions that a female body goes through from conception to labor to birth to nurturing her child, you do not understand her body to begin with, and should not be forcing her to be put into the hands of people that think her body is not capable to do what it does so naturally on its own.

I am informed, I have the option, and I vow to stand by it.

The midwife that I want to deliver alongside me must have experience, expertise and like-mindedness. These qualities are essential to a midwife and certified through others' testimonies and their reputation in their community. Having a license does not guarantee that a midwife has any experience, expertise or like-mindedness- it only guarantees that they have all their paperwork in order, and the "education" behind that paperwork completed. If this bill passes, then all midwives must hold a license- meaning many midwives with decades of experience, thousands of births and the ability to connect to the mother would be banned from their practice. Simply because they do not have all of their schooling or paperwork in order, their over-exceeding skill in birthing would be criminalized. As a mother, I would be devastated if this bill passed and many quality midwives could not practice as before. It would leave many mothers desperate to find new or different midwives outside of their trusted community or in hospitals.

- Makenna Bowen