

Testimony for HB 545 by Cole Ramsey, Ohio Birth Center

Chairman, Members of the Health Provider Services Committee, and Their Staff,

My name is Cole Ramsey. I represent Ohio Birth Center where I am the Outreach & Education Coordinator. I am here today to talk about House Bill 545.

House Bill 545 does three very needed things for Ohio families and providers: it expands the scope of practice for Certified Nurse Midwives, it recognizes and licenses Certified Midwives, and it grants Certified Professional Midwives the option to be licensed by the state.

Currently, Ohio Law prevents Certified Nurse Midwives from practicing their full scope of care. A CNM's training and national certification includes newborn care up to 28 days of life. This is because CNMs care for the whole person and the whole person that person grew.

Being able to care for both a new parent and a newborn in the first 28 days of life allows for a continuity of care for the pair which leads to better outcomes both physically and mentally.

Statistically, those cared for by midwives (and in birth centers), have significantly better birth outcomes and we see this have a ripple effect throughout the first year of life. In birth centers, where almost all care is provided by CNMs, we see a 15% reduction in health care costs over the first year of life for both the birthing person and the baby. This is in part because the dyad has someone to care for them both, together, as the unit they are.

For birth centers, we're required by our national accreditation to provide care for the newborn for a minimum of 48 hours but 28 days is strongly recommended.

In addition to tending to the dyad's medical needs in the first 28 days, midwives also tend to emotional needs and provide breastfeeding support, something most breastfeeding parents need significantly more of, not less.

Being able to attend to both the parent and the baby addresses current gaps in care that lead to issues with breastfeeding and early detection of postpartum depression and anxiety that often need to be addressed quickly. It also ensures a baby can receive care, as sometimes they're not able to get into a pediatrician right away.

In order to function properly, Ohio Birth Center and every other birth center that seeks to operate in Ohio, needs House Bill 545 to pass.

Furthermore, we need more qualified providers in Ohio to tend to the dyad and this is where extending licensure to certified midwives comes into play.

Certified midwives have the same master's level training as CNMs and take the same qualifying board exams. The only thing that makes them different is their lack of a nursing degree. But this doesn't lessen their skills or qualifications. I would even argue it's an asset. CMs are skilled providers and this is something Ohio is deeply in need of. Many of the clients who come tour the birth center tell us they aren't able to get into their OB/GYN office until they're 15 weeks or more pregnant. Some are even being turned away from care by the very doctors they've seen for years.

Ohio needs more skilled providers, not less.

Finally, House Bill 545 also concerns the optional licensing of Certified Professional Midwives (CPMs). CPMs provide home birth care in Ohio. Because they are not currently licensed, they are unable to legally carry life-saving medications and practice under the fear of prosecution.

Home birth is a safe and valid option for parents but current laws make the practice less safe. Ohio Birth Center fully supports the licensing of all midwives, including CPMs.

Thank you for your time today. Are there any questions I can answer for you?