

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

My name is Caitlin Burnett. I am a resident of Cincinnati; have dedicated my career to the nonprofit sector where I work to make our communities a more just place for vulnerable folks, particularly low-income Limited English proficient families; and became a mom with the wonderful and holistic care of a highly qualified CPM team in June 2020. With the support and high quality care of our experienced midwives, my family joyfully and peacefully welcomed our first child - a healthy baby boy - at home, and was assisted in the months that followed as we navigated the stresses of new parenthood in the first months of the pandemic.

For our family, midwifery care made possible the birth of our first son - peacefully, comfortably, trauma-free at home - even as our region's healthcare safety net was thrown into chaos by COVID-19.

As I entered the third trimester of my healthy, low-risk pregnancy, the pandemic triggered the first stay at home orders; my husband couldn't be present for ultrasounds and our doula was disallowed from area hospitals. It was an incredibly scary time to be pregnant and to enter parenthood. Our certified professional midwives were instrumental in ensuring that we had the care and support we needed for healthy, successful birth and for our early postpartum days.

But our path was not without road blocks; prior to the birth, we struggled to gain access to emergency medications that were prescribed to us by our parallel CNMs at a traditional OBGYN practice. We were turned away by 4 pharmacies before we found a pharmacy to fill a script for medications that could have saved my life in the event of an emergency. Routine medications were less troublesome, but still posed a barrier. I support HB 496 because it will provide easier access to these important medications. People at home deserve equal access to both emergency and routine medications, if they choose them.

While the birth of our son was smooth and without complications, I also support HB 496 because it will make transfers smoother and safer by requiring traditional medical providers to universally recognize midwives for the vital care they provide. I also feel that HB 496 is important because it ensures that midwives have met a standard for training and experience in order to be licensed, and builds accountability if they do not practice safely; these steps will help to make non-hospital births more safe and more accessible for everyone who may choose them. My hope is that other families can receive the same caliber of care (at a lower cost than a hospital birth) that our wonderful midwife team provided to us.

As a woman now trying to conceive, my hope is that our second child will also be born at home with midwives. I am wholeheartedly supportive of making sure that I - and all other birthing people - can choose to receive care from safe, competent, trained midwife

providers, including with access to ultrasound and labs to identify problems early, and medications for emergency situations.

I reflect back on my son's birth with joy and pride; home birth with caring, highly competent midwives was absolutely the right way for our family to welcome our son to the world and to start my journey as a mother, and it is a choice that I hope HB 496 helps make available to many more families throughout the state.

On behalf of my family and all families who want access to home birth care, I fully and wholeheartedly support HB 496.

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