

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 have been a CAPPA Certified Doula and Lamaze Certified Childbirth Educator since 2014, and am currently working on my Master's of Science in Nursing at the University of Cincinnati, with plans to continue on my education to become a Certified Nurse Midwife over the next 5 years. In the last 8 years, I have had the privilege of supporting hundreds of families through their birth experience at home, in hospitals and birth centers, alongside obstetricians and midwives with a wide range of professional backgrounds.

I am also a mom. I have three children, and was fortunate to experience both CNM care at a hospital, and care from a direct-entry midwife in my community for their births.

I support HB 496. Home birth will happen whether or not non-nurse midwives are regulated in the state of Ohio. However, this bill offers an opportunity to make birth safer, to improve neonatal and maternal outcomes.

Nationally, the United States ranks last among developed nations, and well below many under-developed nations, regarding maternal and neonatal morbidity and mortality. Here in Ohio, maternal mortality rates have been steadily increasing since 2008 across the board. Additionally, black women and their neonates are 2.5 times as likely to die as their white counterparts here in Ohio. While neonatal mortality rates have been steadily declining, there is more work to be done, as any infant death is one too many.

Research indicates that midwives are the solution. Midwives are shown to lower intervention rates, and lower maternal mortality and morbidity. Midwives also are shown to reduce preterm birth rates, and low birth weight infants, improving neonatal outcomes. In short, competent midwives make birth safer for moms and babies.

Midwives also significantly lower the cost of healthcare. Other states who have licensed midwives have seen reduction in medicare costs due to a decrease in the need for cesarean sections alone.

House Bill 496 is so important because it increases accessibility to the lifesaving care of midwives here in Ohio. The regulation of midwives ensures that all midwives are adequately trained, and have access to lifesaving medications when they are needed. It ensures safe continuity of care between the home and hospital setting when more advanced care is needed (although it often isn't!).

It also preserves the right of Ohioans to make the best choice for themselves regarding their healthcare. It preserves patient autonomy, and their right to make decisions regarding one of the most private and transformative experiences of their lives with their chosen healthcare provider. This is why I support HB 496.

Thank you,

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