

Testimony for Ohio Bill HB545

Thank you for hearing my testimony. In my work as a chiropractor, it is my goal to help my patients achieve a balanced nervous system, to allow for normal physiological processes to be carried out in the body. A very important, normal physiologic process is child birth. It is something that has often been described as a medical event or an emergency. While it can very well become an emergency in some cases, in a healthy, low risk pregnancy, there is often no need to refer to this process as a medical event. It was important to me to respect this during my own pregnancy when I chose to pursue a home birth.

I recognized that the most important aspect of birth is that the birthing mother feels safe and secure in her environment. When a mother is free to choose who will attend her birth and where it will take place, she is able to feel empowered, secure, and safe in her surroundings. Her space is to be held by those she selected to support her and allow her to move and labor as she needs, and most importantly, support her in trusting herself and her body. In our modern world, most births occur in hospital settings where mothers must often fight and advocate for their rights and needs during the most vulnerable time in their lives. For this reason, I chose to birth my son at home, where I would be in complete control of the surroundings and the people in attendance. There was no replacement for my own home as the most safe and comfortable place to birth my son.

Following the birth of my baby, I was supported by my midwives during 5 postpartum appointments over 8 weeks. The care that my midwives took to support me and my son, physically and emotionally, was invaluable to my postpartum experience. Each appointment I had with them was at least an hour, giving me enough time to ask all of my questions and lean on them in any way I needed. Childbirth and becoming a mother is an incredibly emotional and physical transformation, and my midwives were exactly who I needed to support me through this life altering experience. Because of the care and trust I received from my midwives, my birth and postpartum experience can be described as a joy and the highlight of my life.

Where our children are born matters. The experience mothers have during labor matters. The safety and empowerment a mother feels birthing her baby in her own home or a comfortable birth center can change the course of her postpartum experience and the first few months of her baby's life. It matters to the mental and emotional state of the mother and her ability to provide for her new baby. It matters to her ability to produce milk and get rest. It matters to the stability and security her baby feels as they adjust to life outside of the womb. A mother's birth experience should always be her choice when possible, and providing more opportunity for women to choose their birth setting and be under the care of midwives will have a ripple effect of improved maternal and infant health outcomes, the importance of which cannot be overstated. I imagine a world where more mothers are given more opportunities and are empowered through the birth experience would be a very different world indeed.

Thank you,
Dr. Rebecca Keyes