

Buckeye Birth Coalition
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Chair Oelslager, Vice Chair Gross, Ranking Member Somani and Members of the Ohio House Health Provider Services Committee, on behalf of the Buckeye Birth Coalition, thank you for the opportunity to provide proponent testimony in support of House Bill 545.

My name is Meghan Nowland, I'm a CPM who practices in Kentucky, Indiana and Ohio. I have a Bachelor's of Science in Midwifery from the Midwives College of Utah. I trained at a birth center in San Antonio for two years and attended births at home and birth center. Since 2014, I've lived in Cincinnati and serve on the KY Midwives Advisory Council to the Board of Nursing. In 2019, we passed licensure for midwives in KY and since then the council created new regulations for midwives in KY.

This bill is personal to me not only as a midwife but as a sister. My younger sister lives in Illinois and four years ago she had her first child. She and her husband wanted midwifery care and because Certified Professional Midwives were not licensed in IL at the time, she had to drive up an hour into Wisconsin for prenatal care. They planned to give birth at a birth center in WI. They ended up transferring to the hospital during pushing because my niece was having heart rate decelerations. She had a smooth transfer and shortly after she arrived at the hospital she gave birth to my healthy niece vaginally. With her second baby she was able to have a planned home birth with a Certified Professional Midwife because IL passed legislation to license Certified Professional Midwives in 2021.

Some of you will remember the work we did in the last GA with HB 496. Since then, we've worked hard to neutralize some of the opposition. This new bill will create a separate board for Certified Professional Midwives which will sit under the Department of Commerce. We analyzed state's midwifery boards throughout the US and surveyed the boards in Ohio to come up with this solution. This was the biggest ask for the Community Midwives of Ohio. We've protected traditional midwives practicing in Ohio. We've also added a requirement for breech skills training for all licensed midwives, which was an ask from the nurse midwives and something we believe will improve patient safety and outcomes. This legislation will benefit nurse midwives by allowing them to provide newborn care, something which they are already board certified to do, correcting a legislative oversight. March of Dimes gave Ohio a D on the report card for newborn care. Adding in newborn care for nurse midwives will add in 460+ licensed healthcare professionals greatly serve moms and newborns in rural areas.

This legislation will improve collaboration among midwives and physicians and outcomes for families. We are collaborating to get this right. In Texas where I was trained, midwives have been licensed since the early 80s. I saw firsthand how much this integration of midwives benefitted the families, the midwives, and the larger healthcare community.

This afternoon you will hear those testifying talk about how this bill is good for moms and babies. We know the data show that when midwives are well integrated into the healthcare system it results in improved maternal and infant health outcomes, because midwives have high rates of normal spontaneous vaginal births, and low rates of complications. But my favorite thing about this legislation is

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how it will boost Ohio's economy. I would venture to say that all of the women who testify today are small business owners. This bill will benefit female entrepreneurs.

The International Confederation of Midwives and World Health Organization agree there is a shortage of about 1 million midwives worldwide, for reasons such as lack of education options and discrimination against women. One of the big reasons affecting midwives in the United Kingdom and in Ohio is midwives graduating and then being unable to use their training due to inappropriate or prohibitive regulations. This legislation will help boost our workforce and provide greater ability for incoming midwives to practice. It will help our student and new midwives be able to find jobs, create jobs, and for our existing midwives to employ Ohio workers.