

February 19, 2023

Greetings Chair Peña-Melnyk and Members of the Committee,

My name is Jessica Watts, and I am writing in favor of HB351.

After my first pregnancy ended in a cesarean, I was forced to fight long and hard to find a supportive VBAC provider for my second and third pregnancies. In the end, I wasn't successful, and at every step I felt stripped of my personal autonomy.

My difficult journey lead me to midwifery school — to help those who find themselves unseen and unheard. I'm writing to you today, because Certified Professional Midwives (CPMs) having the ability to attend VBACs are precisely what our community needs.

Our state's current cesarean rate is among the highest in the country — over 30% of births in MD end up in an operating room. The World Health Organization states that the number of cesareans should not exceed 10-15%.

While those numbers are staggering, what's worse is the lack of support for birthing people who seek a Vaginal Birth After Cesarean (VBAC) - in several Maryland counties there isn't a single provider who will attend a VBAC.

I ask for your support of HB351 so that those that desire a VBAC have access to safe, supportive care.

Thank you for your time.

Kindly,

Jessica Watts

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