

Dear Legislators,

My name is Kimberleigh Weiss-Lewit and I live in Southern Vermont. I serve families in Vermont as an International Board Certified Lactation Consultant, a doula and a Perinatal Mental Health Specialist. In addition to my work with Vermont families, I support new parents at a birth center in New Hampshire. I am also a mother and three of my four children were born at a birth center in Connecticut while my family lived in New York and then New Jersey. When I first discovered the birth center model of care at 36 weeks pregnant with my first child, I felt an immediate sense of relief. The birth center and midwives who cared for people there wanted for my birth what I wanted—a safe, calm, private and loving environment to go through one of life's most profound experiences. My birth there changed my life and my midwife truly raised the bar on what it means to care for people. I chose to birth my next two children there even though for my third I now lived two states away. I rearranged my schedule for visits and stayed close to the birth center near my due date. That baby was born on Christmas morning into the same loving hands that had supported my first birth. My parents and other child spent the morning in the comfort of the birth center and we all returned home after a few hours.

As a woman, mother and a perinatal professional, it has been so hard for me to reconcile everything I know and love about Vermont and its embrace of reproductive freedom and deep care of families with the lack of birth centers as an option. I regularly work with families who chose home births who would embrace a birth center birth and many Vermont parents who leave the state to receive the care at a birth center.

Finding and giving birth in a freestanding birth center gave me the care, confidence and community to start my parenting journey from a place of strength and agency. I strongly believe Vermont birthing people deserve the choice in how and where they bring their children into the world. Midwives are incredibly skilled and compassionate providers and Vermont should embrace and support their efforts to serve families in all settings.

Thank you for your time on this important issue.

Sincerely,
Kimberleigh Weiss-Lewit