

From: Weber, Robert (LRC)  
Sent: Wednesday, February 17, 2016 4:53 PM  
To: LRCeNews  
Subject: Panel delivers midwives licensing bill to KY Senate

News Release

Feb. 17, 2016

Panel delivers midwives licensing bill to KY Senate

FRANKFORT – The state Senate Committee on Health and Welfare passed a bill today that would create a board to license midwives in Kentucky.

Sen. Tom Buford, R-Nicholasville, who introduced the legislation known as Senate Bill 85, said the need for it was brought to his attention by midwives who felt a state license would help legitimize their profession and bring further safeguards to expecting mothers.

“It is not illegal to have your child at home or, as we obviously see in the news, in a taxicab on the side of the road or police car or emergency vehicle,” he said. “This happens all the time. This is nothing new. This has been going on since Adam and Eve.”

Buford said SB 85 would advance public safety because it ensures families who prefer out-of-hospital births will have access to qualified care providers. He added that Tennessee, Missouri, Virginia and Indiana have similar laws.

SB 85 supporter Robin Elise Weiss testified that home births would save tax dollars because about 50 percent of births in Kentucky are covered by Medicaid. She said of the 56,000 babies born in Kentucky in 2014, 20,000 were delivered by cesarean section – a medical procedure that adds, on average, \$3,700 to a hospital bill.

“It brings professionals together for the health and welfare for Kentucky’s birthing families – the most venerable populations in Kentucky with responsibly, accountability and professionalism on all parts,” said Weiss, who teaches at the University of Louisville School of Public Health and Information Sciences. “Currently, home births is an underground marketplace. If you want a midwife, you need to know who to talk to. You can’t go to any respected health entity and ask for a list of vetted professionals. You have to rely on word of mouth.”

Sen. Alice Forgy Kerr, R-Lexington, voted in favor of SB 85.

“As one of the three members of this committee that has given birth, I think this is a great bill,” she said. “I think it is an opportunity for women and their families to be able to share in what should be a 99.9 percent natural occurrence. It is not a disease we are trying to cure here.”

Sen. Reginald Thomas, D-Lexington, said he voted for the bill because he believes it would increase the rate of breast feeding in Kentucky.

“Midwives are some of the top proponent ... of breast feeding,” he said.

Sen. Jimmy Higdon, R-Lebanon, voted for the bill but said he was concerned about the cost to establish a new licensing board. He cited a legislative staff report that put the startup cost at \$62,000.

“I think we have a fiduciary duty to the taxpayers to know what it is costing us,” he said. “I think it is a questing we need to ask going forward every time we do licensure ... instead of reaching up in the air and grabbing a number.”

Sen. Ralph Alvarado, a pediatrician, voted against SB 85.

He said the bill would establish a new independent medical practitioner in Kentucky but not require the practitioner to have a professional relationship with a doctor or medical facility. He said other health practitioners such as physician assistants have to have a four-year degree, two years of training in addition to a professional relationship with a doctor.

SB 85 will now go to the full Senate for consideration.

-- END --