

Something huge happened on January 4. We got a law that is going to change the future of midwifery in Michigan, Public Act 417, signed by the Governor.

Every time I've sat down to write this letter I've ended up with something too big, too unwieldy, trying to explain the whole history of how we got here and what I think the future might look like.

But it's felt every time like I was talking *at* people every time I tried to tell the story of what the work to get this bill passed looks like, or to give a vision of what I think the future could be. This is *our* past and *our* future.

I've included FAQs about the bill text and about the education requirements for the new licensure. Knowledge is always powerful. And Connie Perkins and I are going to host five information sessions across the state where we, helped by other regional midwives, facilitate a conversation about all of the things that people are concerned about. Can I still practice? What is it going to cost? How do I get certified if I'm not now? What do we think the rules are going to look like? Why did the people making the law choose to do things the way that they did? How do they get made? Who is on the midwifery board? How can I change things if I don't like them? What kinds of positive things will this law bring? Look for details in email very soon. We plan meetings in Oakland County, Washtenaw County, Ingham County, Isabella County, and Kent County. If someone wants to facilitate a meeting further north, we'll try to share our resources too.

I'm really excited about what this law will bring (except for all of the work slogging through the rules process for the next two years – I'm not excited about that). But I understand that part of why the balance between my excitement and apprehension leans more toward feelings of positivity than dread is because I am already certified. 15 years ago, when I started the process of becoming a midwife, I did a traditional apprenticeship, but chose to become a CPM because I thought we might move and I wanted to make sure there were as few barriers as possible to my working in another state as there could be. I was passionate about being a midwife. I didn't want anything to get in the way. I understand that for folks who didn't choose that path, either because it conflicted with their beliefs or because there were too many obstacles, things are harder now and the barriers to continuing to work the way that they always have seem very large.

What I want to say now is that we can help each other. I have spaces coming up in the next year or two in my practice for midwives who need a preceptor. I am happy to run a study group or loan books to midwives who need to prepare for the CPM exam. Others have volunteered the same. I am happy to fundraise to cover fees. Nothing would give me more pleasure than to raise money to take the burden off of my sister midwives who are facing a heavy load. We have new midwives moving into our state every day. Because I'm the president of the state organization, people considering moving here often write me – the prospect of licensing has brought more than a few in who now feel like they can work here when before they were hesitant. The more of us there are, the easier it will be to get through

training, get through certification, back each other up, make connections with hospitals and doctors, grow our community, grow homebirth. This is one of the things I'm most excited about – growing homebirth. Since licensing 10 years ago, Wisconsin has nearly tripled the number of families who get to have homebirths. That's huge. We do such good work. We have had limited opportunities to serve more than 1% of the women in our state because of our legal barriers and now, those barriers can begin to fall away. We can bring our high breastfeeding rates and low c-section rates and low rates of birth trauma and joyful, physiological births to people in new settings and in new communities.

Why do I have hope instead of fear? Because the people who were part of our movement proved that if you work hard enough and for long enough, you can be victorious over some very huge enemies. When I do tell the story of this movement, it will be clear what a David and Goliath struggle it was, and how it was full of humble heroes. I know that brave people can step up and make good rules for us, rules that will empower midwives and families, and that people who are willing to show up and do the hard work can make a difference. The future is not fixed. We have the power to mold it. Together.