

(introductory music)

DISCLAIMER: Welcome to *Taking Back Birth*, a podcast for women who know the truth about birth and those who want to explore the path of radical birth love. I'm your host, Maryn Green. *Taking Back Birth* celebrates the power you have to make decisions in alignment with your own truth. Decisions not subject to anyone else's authority. Decisions that create experiences that will change your life. *Taking Back Birth* is a production of the Indie Birth Private Contract Association and indiebirth.org. No material on this podcast should be considered medical advice. Birth is not a medical event.

(music)

MARYN: Welcome to podcast Friday. It is precisely 1:00 p.m. here, and I meant to do this this morning. But I don't know. Just other things seemed to come first this morning. Did some yoga, took a hike, Jason had some things to do. So better late than never, I guess. Today I'm going to be talking about my journey to using a Private Membership Association as a midwife. I have been utilizing this structure for close to ten years. And it's becoming an increasingly popular topic especially for us with creating more midwives and doulas. It seems like a lot of the women that are coming our way want to know more. So I realize, now that I'm thinking about it, that we have just piece of this information around. So this podcast is another attempt to bring more clarity to this concept and, again, to share my journey in one place because we have pieces all over. So we have some of the story in our book. If you haven't read our book, we hope you will and would love it. That's called *Indie Birth: A Story of Radical Birth Love*. It is on Amazon and, as far as I know, ships pretty much anywhere in the world because they print on demand.

So that's where one piece is. I'll give some other resources along the way today with some other pieces. And yeah. Perhaps this will just entice more people, if this feels right to you, to consider this model. And even if doesn't really even apply to work you're doing just the knowledge. Just the knowledge that this is a thing. It is out there. People are doing it. And yeah. See what comes. My son put a password on my phone. I hate that. I guess I could just take it off. But every time I want to look at these notes having to do that, I really didn't make many notes. I just wanted to make sure I hit all the points on my timeline today since that's largely what this journey is. And yeah. I don't really have too many other notes. I think with doing podcasts every week I've been less diligent about that frankly. It seems like Fridays just keep coming. They're coming. And I am not always the most prepared, but I think it will do since this is really just a chat anyway.

Oh, okay. Before I start, something I was going to try out today, I was going to also record this on the Clubhouse app, if anyone is there. Feel free to find me. I'm super new

there as of yesterday. I feel like I actually have no idea how to use it. So it was pretty bold that I thought I would just do this there. If you don't now, it's kind of like an audio chat app. And people are sort of presenting. So it's not unlike listening to a podcast in many cases from what I can tell. But they're live. They're not recordings. So I had had this grand idea this morning and even set it up. But no one really saw it as far as I could tell because I'm very new, and I'm not really following people. And people really aren't following me yet. So I hope maybe to get the hang of it. I mean not that I need another app or you do either. But it looks kind of cool, and I'm wondering if it would just be another way to reach new people. It looked like there was a lot of people there in the birth world that I don't know, and I don't think have any idea who I am.

So stay tuned. If you're on the Clubhouse app, find me over there. And if you're really knowledgeable at it, find me there and give me a tutorial because, as of right now, I am not. But it seems cool. So anyway, onto the story of my journey to using a PMA and to rescinding my license. And many of you have heard the story. You've heard bits and pieces. You've heard the whole thing. You know the whole thing. So sorry. Sorry if it's repetitive. But I really just want to start from the beginning so it makes sense. And those of that are new or maybe you're tuning in because you're just curious about a PMA, you can have the full picture because without that—yeah. I don't think it'll make a whole lot of sense.

So I'm not going to tell my whole life story. But as far as I was a student. Obviously, I was a student midwife once upon a time. Of course, we're all always students, aren't we? But formally a student in an apprenticeship in Chicago. And Chicago, Illinois is notorious for not only not regulating home birth midwives but openly making it illegal. So that was my midwife childhood. That was how I grew up as a baby midwife in a place where midwives felt like they had to be underground. The ones I worked with. They weren't CNMs or Certified Nurse Midwives, which is the only legal type of midwife in Illinois. And that was an adventure really. I saw great births. It was an amazing apprenticeship, but I knew that I wouldn't probably want to be a midwife there myself. And that really came to a head as far as that decision being right for me at the time and our family because the midwife I did work with—and, again, she was kind of underground although she was a CPM or Certified Professional Midwife. That's not recognized there, however. She was pursued by the State of Illinois. She had her house searched. She had some kind of legal action taken upon her for attending births. I mean I don't even know exactly all the details because it wasn't my life. But it was traumatizing. It was traumatizing as a student to see this and to see just not only how not accepted home birth midwifery is in places but how it's a criminal case.

So I was sure once she left—because she felt pretty much forced to leave the area at a certain point and moved to Canada actually. I felt it was time to move on. And in my mind getting a license, so we decided to move to Arizona where my parents were. A

license seemed like duh. The best option because what's better for safety than having a license. I don't feel that way anymore. But a lot of people, a lot of midwives, a lot of doulas, a lot of students do think that's the answer. And it's not my job here to tell you if that's the answer for you. But I think it's also just a really common misconception. So I thought that. Totally raising my hand here. I really did think that a license would protect me. And that it was the best and safest thing to do. And I was truly happy to be moving to a state where midwifery was regulated because, again, Illinois not only is there no regulation but it's this underground deal.

And another side story, the midwife that attended my second birth, which was my first interaction with home birth midwives, she was a single mom. At the time, her daughter was 12 or 13. And I remember going to her house for prenatal, the couple that we had before Egan was born. And this is a really poignant and sad memory. I remember that she showed me in her drawer in the kitchen were explicit instructions for her daughter, for anyone that would need to know if she got arrested. And that was really hard. Like I can't imagine how hard that was for her. I mean even though that's the reality honestly for all of us licensed or not, if you want the truth. And I don't live with that on my brain on a daily basis which I'll get into. But this woman did. She felt like she had to especially as a single mom. And I don't think that's dumb. I think that was probably a smart thing to do and to think about because she was very consciously choosing to be an underground midwife which is a felon in Illinois. The way she was doing it.

And for so long, midwives have felt, in many places not just Illinois that this is their only option. That yes. They're brave enough to still do it. So high five for that because I think a lot of women just aren't even willing. There are women that have been willing for decades and decades. They have been willing to hide and, again, be underground and face the music, if and when, they needed to. So that is a memory that really stuck with me. And as her client, I wasn't in midwifery at all yet. I didn't know anything about anything. I was really humbled. I felt really, "Wow. This woman is living her life work to know that at any point in time she could be arrested. But she's still choosing to be with me. She's still choosing to be my midwife," was really life changing on a deep level even though I didn't realize it at the time. And, of course, I didn't have any idea I'd be getting into this. So these are the things that stick with us.

And I do respect her for that. And I do respect all of the generations of midwives before me that have chosen that route. But this is part of my story and why I chose not to. And it's probably because I had those experiences early on. So where am I going with this? And really having notes on my phone is sort of annoying. Lots of incoming things here. Okay. So we moved to Arizona. I sought a license. And it took a very long time in the scheme of this process. I mean not in the scheme of life. But my apprenticeship overall between Illinois and Arizona was about five years. So when I got to Arizona, I was like, "Oh, man. Just can I get this done?" It felt like I had been a student for a long time. And

a lot of the work that I had done in Illinois didn't cross over paperwork wise because, again, this midwife wasn't legally recognized even though she was a CPM. So I was kind of starting over with paperwork, so there was that. And then there was just the hoops. The hoops of state licensing to jump through. And truly, I don't even remember all of them. There were all kinds of different tests that I had to take before passing all of them, of course, and then culminating in an eight-hour skills exam that was difficult. And I did really well on. In fact, I think I was, at that point, they told me the highest score that had ever come through.

And I studied my ass off. I mean when I tell you I studied, I studied. I tape recorded myself on the daily. Having been a musician was very helpful because I knew how to prepare for something like this. It was essentially a performance. That's what it was. So I would tape record myself talking through a physical exam, a newborn exam, whatever. So I had to demonstrate eight hours worth of skills, just me, to get a license in Arizona. So we do talk about—we do even now—the low standard that licensing is in most states. And I can't attest to that precisely in any place but here. And it was hard actually. So that might sound confusing. The CPM credential, which is a certification, sort of has this reputation of not being the hardest thing to achieve because that test truly—multiple choice test isn't really that hard. But I'm saying that in the state of Arizona, at that time, these things were different. A license was separate from the CPM certification. And the test was actually quite challenging.

So I was very proud of myself, of course. And I was just thrilled to get—receive—get receipt of the notice that I had passed all the testing, and I was officially a licensed midwife in Arizona. And I was licensed midwife #159, if my memory serves me correct. So kind of creepy. They give you a number. But, again, I just wasn't ready to question it yet. Back up a little bit, sorry. This is not perfectly chronological. When I was in the midst of testing, it involved money. It involved many different sorts of applications and letters of reference. It was a very long process. And at one point, the state of Arizona told me that they didn't have the money to continue my testing. And I don't even know what was meant by that. I don't know if they meant a delay or what. But I was seriously annoyed. More than annoyed. There was no way that I wasn't going to get a license when I had worked so hard to prepare myself and wanted on so badly. The irony. Totally ironic.

So I remember hiring a lawyer to deal with them because it didn't feel fair. And I'm sure it wasn't really. I don't think they're actually allowed to do that. But it's just a funny testament to my perseverance to get this thing, this piece of paper. And now I can totally see how the universe was trying to tell me something. The universe was giving me a couple of roadblocks for me to either reconsider or change my mind, but I was very, very, very determined. So the lawyer succeeded. They weren't allowed to tell me they didn't have money in the department for me to get a license. That's not okay. And

everything went through. But, again, I don't know. If I had to do it over, I wouldn't change anything. And I think that's part of the story always when I tell it. It was absolutely perfect. And my life right now and all the things I've learned and our school, so much is built on this experience and, I think, the wisdom that I received. So I wouldn't change it. But it's funny looking back. It was totally a sign.

And that wasn't the only sign. There were definitely things along the way that felt weird. And it was fear. It was fear that was motivating me to do this. And I think that's really important to talk about, and that's something I really want to highlight today because I am not an expert on the actual structure of a PMA. I am not my husband, Jason, who many of you have learned from. And if you haven't, I will include a link here later for his PCA 101 class. So there are people that are nerds when it comes to why this works, how it works, everything you want to know. That is not this podcast. This is my experience. And this concept of fear is really important to consider. So I made the decision from a fear based perspective. I didn't want to wind up like the woman I had worked with. I was traumatized. I didn't want my house searched. I didn't want my children affected. So this seemed to me, again, to be the safest way.

But it wasn't completely resonant. Something felt wrong every time I took another step. And like any process that's government oriented, right? Everybody knows what those look like. There's red tape. And there's difficult people to deal with usually. And there's lots of signing on the dotted line and producing your ID. I mean it doesn't feel like nothing. And if you're in tune with that kind of energy, which I was only half in tune, if that, at the time, then energy is not resonant for me now at all because there is this feeling of fear around that whole process. And really a feeling of control. And here in Arizona, it's not this way anymore, but it was this many years ago. The department that regulated midwifery was sort of nonexistent. So there was one man in an office. And sort of sadly, I don't think he's alive anymore. It was a very terrible job. And I wouldn't doubt if it affected someone's health because it was probably not fun for him to be in that role. He knew nothing about midwives. He knew nothing about midwifery. And if I am correct, the same office that regulated midwifery licensing also regulated hearing aid specialists. And I could be wrong but also cosmetology or something completely unrelated.

So there was not a medical board. There was not even a board at all. There was simply this one man in charge of something he knew nothing about which I'm sure a lot of the midwives found just fine and probably meant a lot of people got away with a lot of stuff actually. But in my case, it was not that way and ended up being really disappointing that there weren't any actual midwives to vouch for the situation I was in. Again, in hindsight, it's perfect. So don't make decisions out of fear. That's kind of where that was going. This is a ramble. So I got the license. And my community threw me a big party. It was amazing. And I felt so legitimate. And that's so interesting, isn't it? We talk about

that now. If you're not new to the politics of midwifery, we talk about these things, right? A piece of paper does not make you a midwife. It does not make you legitimate, but it did feel like that for me. It did feel like that. And I was a brand new midwife. I had barely been to births on my own, so it all felt new and shiny and sort of weird. But I was very excited. And I was excited to be the only licensed midwife in my area which seemed really important to me.

So kind of fast forward, I'm not going to go through the whole story. But VBACs or vaginal births after cesarean, at that point—and this changed after my whole case happened. But at that point in time, licensed midwives here in Arizona were not permitted to attend women at home that had had a cesarean. So I did. And, again, not sorry. This was a woman who I was friends with. She literally lived around the corner from me. And I won't lie. I got emotionally invested in her cause as well. These women, in many places—maybe you're one—they don't have a lot of options. She didn't have any other options locally. It was either a cesarean at the hospital or several hour drive to try for a VBAC down in Phoenix. So things have changed for me. I think I'm more discriminatory now, and my whole sense of who is responsible has changed. So this could potentially be a very long podcast.

So that's all to say that that's really hard when women don't have choices. But I also chose to accept that I either could or didn't need to help her, if that makes sense. So I didn't have to help her. But I chose to. Again, would I do that again? I don't know. I mean I think I didn't take it very seriously that I had signed this agreement with the state because that's what a license is. It's a contract between—in that case, me and the State of Arizona that I would honor them. I would follow their rules and regulations and not the woman in front of me. And by agreeing to that, I had already agreed that a woman who had had a cesarean was prohibited from my care. So I didn't take that seriously because many midwives in the state here for 20, 30 years have been attending VBACs with nothing ever having come of it. So I didn't take it as seriously as I perhaps should. And I also just wasn't honoring that contract which I'm not super proud of that other than it led it to the ultimate rejection of the license which, again, was perfect.

But when I look back—and even now when I hear of licensed midwives going outside of their license, I feel like I don't have a lot of respect for that even though I made that choice too, and it was almost like feeling more like a martyr or a hero in a sense. Like, "Oh, well, I know I'm not supposed to, but I want to help you. And I'm just going to do what I want." And I think a lot of midwives with licenses fell that way. They're like, "Ugh. Well, whatever, it's just this thing I've said I'm doing, but I'm not really doing it." And, again, I did it too. But now it looks so different to me. It looks so different because a contract is a contract. Even if I hadn't signed my name on the dotted line, which I did, it's an energetic agreement. I had agreed to serve the state. So it's much like when we are counseling women who really don't want the shit that a hospital brings for birth. But

they're choosing it. And you get to a certain point when you're counseling people, I think hopefully sooner than later, where you start to point these conflicts of energy out. And you say to someone, "Hey, if you don't want Chinese food, you don't go to a Chinese restaurant," right? Wait. If you don't want Chinese food—yeah. What am I saying? Some kind of an analogy like that. If you want Italian food, then why would you go to a Chinese restaurant? Man, I'm messing up my metaphors. You get the picture.

So it's the same thing with a license. If you don't agree and you don't want and you don't want the state looking over your shoulder and telling you what to do, then you don't get a license. But, of course, that's not actually how it's looking in real life. And I didn't do that either. So full transparency there. And yeah. I think that's—for me, it was a sign of immaturity. It was also a lack of following my own truth and believing that I had to compromise to serve women. Believing that that was the best I could do. And, again, I think my experiences prior to that made that so that it made sense to my brain at the time. But that does not make sense to me anymore. And honestly, I would say it 100 times again to anyone that cared to listen. If you're going to get a license, then do what you're supposed to do because otherwise how do you live in integrity with yourself? And also as important, how do you sit with women and say to them, "Yeah. I have a license, but I'll do this. Or I won't—I'll help you pass 42 weeks. Or who cares about that? If your baby is breech, I'll just be your friend at that birth."

Women lying about being in the system doesn't help create the new thing. It simply enforces this negative energy cloud around the licensing system because we think we found a way to make it work for us. And ultimately, that's not really working, which is why I think licensing isn't really working for women. It might be working for midwives here and there. They can take on lots of clients. They can accept insurance. And they're needing to make a living, so I get that. But we are sacrificing the choices of women and families by doing that. So that was my situation. I did attend a VBAC. Nothing terrible happened except that the woman chose to go to the hospital during her very long labor, which I think was an appropriate choice. Although nothing seemed to be clinically wrong, I think you always listen to a woman in labor. And she was done. She didn't want to do it anymore. So she knew going in it would be a repeat cesarean. That's all she was going to get here. And so that's what happened.

And so the gossip was while she was kind of under recovering from this major surgery, the doctor on call who is notoriously belligerent towards midwives here and still practices unfortunately—a really not very nice man. He questioned her family, who was in the waiting room. I believe the story was. And basically found out my name. So that's what it is. And in the State of Arizona and in many places where midwives are allowed to have licenses, there is also this really dark side in that it's not really supported, of course, by the medical community. We can pretend it is. And I think a lot of midwives, like I did, feel really proud of themselves. They feel really legitimate. But the truth is we,

they, whoever, will never be a welcomed part of some medical communities. And this doctor at this hospital was definitely one. So it made no difference that I had proved my intelligence through testing for example. I mean I was no different to them than someone who knew nothing and was hopping around attending births. No. They knew and still to this day I don't think care about any of it.

So part of this dark side is that the medical world always wins in these scenarios. And by getting a license, you're putting yourself in their sphere. And you're basically saying, "Hey, you say what you think about me. You say what you think about midwives," when they have no idea of the situation. So this doctor had no idea who I was. He had no idea about this client of mine. He had no idea what kind of care she had received or anything at all. And he filed an anonymous—which, of course, wound up to not be anonymous—and anonymous complaint online which I'm pretty sure anybody can do here still about a licensed midwife. So just think about that. It's not that way for doctors. You can't just go file an anonymous complaint online, I don't think, about a doctor. You would probably need proof. And I think we've tried here—Margo and I—over the years for various reasons. Clients that were treated really poorly in the hospital. Clients have tried to file complaints about doctors. Nope. Doesn't work that way. Nobody cares because the predominant system is the medical system.

So they just laugh when they get those kind of complaints. But when a complaint about a midwife comes in, they take it all the way. And no proof was needed. They could have said whatever they wanted. It's really scary. And so that is really sad, I think, that that lack of transparency doesn't come with the license. So how would I have known that? Here I was. This new midwife also newly licensed. I really wish, actually, there was some sort of handbook for licensing that I could have received. And in there could have been all these disclaimers like, "Hey, anybody can file a complaint about you. And if that happens, we will investigate it. And you will need to defend yourself. And we don't have any knowledge of midwifery, so we're totally going to go with what the doctor said or didn't say. And he gets to remain anonymous while we prosecute you or persecute you."

So that's just really awful, isn't it? I think it's so awful. So awful. And it's such a crazy world we live in where a doctor can make that his business because this woman was not unhappy. She, of course, didn't want a repeat cesarean. But this happens. And she didn't blame me. There wasn't anything wrong. He simply stuck his nose in and hates the idea of anyone having the ability to even try for a vaginal birth after cesarean and made it his business to file that complaint. So that was kind of the beginning of the end for my license although over the next two years—can you believe? Two years. There were many chances for me to lie or—I don't know. There were lots of ways I could have kind of weaseled out of it. And the department, even though it wasn't a department—it was this man. The department gave me many opportunities to do that. And even my

client said, "I will lie for you. I will do whatever I need to do. I will tell them you didn't pay me. Whatever you need. I don't need to see you go this route, if you don't want to."

But I wanted to. I mean call me radical even then. I wasn't interested in lying. And I can't really explain that except I think it was becoming increasingly clear to me that I did not belong there. And it's almost like I wanted to fight about it, to be honest. I wanted a fight even though that's really immature, and I knew there was no way I would win. There was no way I would win on their terms. And even in the best case scenario, which I mean it's not the best, but thinking how I thought back then, if I kept my license, I was going to be in the same boat day after day. And I knew deep down that if it wasn't this time that that all came to a close it was going to happen. I wasn't going to stay with a license and be able to live that way and practice that way for very long.

So I'm not sure why I let it go on so long other than it just wasn't time. And speaking of PMAs, which, yes, I'm actually going to get to that, that hadn't appeared to me yet. So I really was just kind of stringing along trying to figure out how I was going to still do this work if I didn't have a license. So many years went by. This was not a criminal charge. This was an administrative case. And it really never amounted to anything. It was just a lot of drama frankly. I continued to practice. It wasn't fun. It was very traumatizing. I was pregnant at the time with True. It was a very difficult pregnancy. It was a very difficult birth. But after his birth, I knew that it was time to let go. And his was a free birth, and it wasn't easy. But it taught me so many things. And I'm not going to babble on about that because it's in the book. And it's many other places. But essentially, it taught me my truth. And that's why he's name True honestly.

So it taught me my truth. I knew I could never have a license again. I knew I could never allow the government to tell me how to behave with women, who are choosing me to be there, and wanting to make themselves this equal third party in our relationship. And I knew the answer would come. So after True was born, it was like a light bulb had gone off in some kind of ways or the fog had cleared or whatever analogy you want to use. And I knew that I'd be giving my license back even though they tried to mediate it several times. They were willing to offer me all kinds of bargains and deals to keep my license. And I didn't want any of them. And my lawyer eventually quit for me which was fine. He got frustrated, and he was like, "I don't understand what you want. You hired me to keep your license. Here they are saying you can keep it. You just have to do this thing or that thing, and you don't want to do it. So I'm done." I was like, "Cool. Be done because I'm done. I'm done too. And I don't want it." And I sent them a letter. And you can find the letter online. I sent the state a letter. It's called *An Open Letter to Women Who Care About Their Birthing Rights*. You can find that on Google. And I sent it to them. And I just said I'm not going to do this anymore. And you can keep regulating the people that want to be regulated, but women don't want that. And I am not a licensed midwife anymore here in Arizona. And I never will take a license again.

And I was done. And it felt so good. And I had no idea what was next. And on my darkest days, I thought, “Well, I’ll just not practice midwifery anymore perhaps.” Maybe I’ll just do prenatal counseling or who knows. But I might not ever go to a birth again. And in a way, it was fine because I just couldn’t sell my soul anymore. So along that train of thought, I started researching, of course, like any person would do, right? Get on the Google and just start looking things up. And I don’t really remember how I came upon this book on Amazon. And it was called *Guidelines for Unlicensed Practitioners* by Lawrence Wilson. Dr. Lawrence Wilson. Something along those lines. You’ll find it if you want to.

And I’m not saying you should read it, but I did. I bought it right away. And it’s really simple and easy to read. You could probably read it in half an hour. And I was like, “Oh my god. There is a way. And this guy is doing it.” He’s a doctor. And here was the crazy, synchronistic part. This guy, Lawrence Wilson—I don’t know if he’s still alive. But he was. And he lives an hour from here. So he could have lived anywhere in the world, and here he was. And the whole book explains constitutional law and how a private contract is created and how practitioners can utilize that to practice without a license. So it felt like gold. So much so that I bought a bunch of copies and sent them to people I knew. Other midwives that had been persecuted and prosecuted. Nobody bit. They all thought it was crazy. I was just kind of alone and wondering, “Was this real? Why was everyone so scared of it?” Didn’t seem that crazy to me.

So more research, down the rabbit hole, more Google. Finding herb companies along the lines that had set up a PMA and used it to sell herbs that allegedly could cure cancer, which you can’t say that if you don’t want to be shut down by the government. So I can’t remember the name of the herb company. But they had had success using a PMA. They had been shut down initially without the PMA for the products they were selling. And then whatever. They had success, and nobody bothered them. So I found them. And then eventually, I found—I can’t remember. I’m always so bad at saying the names of things on these podcasts. But I don’t know that it’s relevant because I’m not sure it’s around anymore. But there was a guy, Carl Somebody or other, in Texas I want to say. And he’s no longer alive. But I think his son or sons or somebody might have taken over his business. He was the first guy I encountered that personally knew a lot about the PMA and was willing to be paid to set them up for people.

So the guy, Lawrence Wilson, he was not up for that. He wasn’t doing that. He was just the author of this book. And I couldn’t even get a hold of him personally. So that was a dead end even though that information was like so valuable. And then I kept Googling, found this other stuff, and then found this guy Carl. And this was almost ten years ago but paid him \$5,000 to set up my own PMA. And that was a lot of money for me at the time. And I mean I think it’s still a lot of money for paperwork. But it wasn’t just that to me. It was more of a promise of following my own truth. And in some moments, it did

seem too good to be true. But I also talked to other practitioners that were using it at the time. I talked to—let's see. I think a chiropractor. I did talk to an actual MD, medical doctor, not licensed, of course. A guy here in Arizona who had also given back his license and was practicing like this. And I did talk to him on the phone. I don't remember his name. He was an older guy but same deal. He was really treating people for things that you're not allowed to treat people for using a license. And so he went the PMA route. And at the time that I talked to him, he had had success. He said the only downside for him was that he could no longer accept insurance and that that had cut into his business. But otherwise, the medical board in Arizona had left him alone to just do what he wanted to do because he didn't have a license. And he was set up as a Private Membership Association.

So I did my due diligence, I thought, with the research that was available at the time and the people to talk to. And I thought, "I have nothing to lose really." I mean I do. But I also want to take this jump. And I don't want to be scared to do this work. And I don't want to practice underground. I am not comfortable being an underground midwife and lying essentially. I was done lying. I didn't want to call myself a doula when that wasn't true. I didn't want to make up other words and lie about what I was doing. I wanted to openly be a midwife and practice openly in this way that I saw was possible. So that was really amazing to just know there was a possibility. And it was something I knew to be true before I found this concept of a PMA. I knew, knew, knew, knew, knew deep down somewhere that there was a way to do this. I mean if you just think about it for a moment. Why wouldn't there be when this is the calling for many of us? And it's women's work. And it shouldn't be regulated. I mean, of course, I believe that. It's not a disease. Birth is not a disaster. There is no reason a midwife should be submitting to a medical board, who has totally different beliefs about birth, in order to do her work.

And the history of licensing is also so interesting. I'm not going to go into that here. But if you've gotten this far listening, you might be someone that really wants to know. First of all, Margo and I have a new course coming out where we'll have all of this information in one place. It's called, I believe, *The Beginner's Guide to Radical Midwifery*. And there will be all kinds of info in there about politics and history because I think we do need to understand the history of licensing before we can fully reject it, if that's what we're going to do. And yeah. A really awesome book. It's called *Making Midwives Legal* by Raymond DeVries. And that's also on Amazon. That book changed my life. And so I felt like I was really on the path for me. This wasn't a haphazard choice. Finding the structure of the PMA wasn't, to me—and this is part of the conversation. It wasn't, to me, this magic bullet that I think a lot of people see it as or want it to be. It was a result of a lot of hard work and introspection and coming to a place where something appeared. Literally appeared before me that I knew I was meant to do.

So I did that. I did the PMA paperwork. I started to use it with my clients. And initially, of course, it felt a little weird. Everybody here was aware of the prosecution, persecution that had gone on. In fact, my community had raised me a whole lot of money to fund my legal bills, which was really cool.

But people were confused. They weren't living my life. They weren't keeping up with the day to day. There was gossip, of course. I think there's always gossip. People didn't know what had happened or why I had given it back or did something happen to a baby and all this stuff. So it was a lot to process. And this PMA, in some ways, just felt like another thing I was trying to explain to people. It doesn't feel like that anymore almost ten years later. But it did. And I felt this need to validate myself by explaining it. Maybe over explaining it. And I didn't have a license anymore, and this is how it works. And it's a private contract between people. And state rules and regulations are public. And those don't apply. And by signing the contract, you agree, as the client, that you are essentially responsible for your well being, and you're choosing me as your midwife but in this private structure.

So it was a lot to get used to. It was kind of clunky. And I really wasn't sure. Does this work? Does it not work? I still wouldn't say 100% anything really about it except that I have been using it and that I'm obviously very public as a midwife. And so there's that. But at the time, yeah. It felt like a big experiment, but one I was willing to do. And, of course, the clients that I had had they didn't really care or question it. And there were people that came that didn't understand. And there were people that ultimately did. And nowadays, it's not really even something I bring up. I just simply say, "Hey, here's the contract that you need to sign to work with me. You're welcome to ask me any questions. I do not have a license in Arizona on purpose. I can tell you the story. I can tell you anything you want to know." And you know what? No one even cares. They're just like, "Yep. Yep. Yep. That's fine. You're our midwife." Or, "Oh yeah. We do know about that, and that's how we found you. And we only want to work with someone that is working that way because we don't want our kid under the radar. We don't want a birth certificate." Or, "We just resonate. We don't want the government in our life." Or, "We respect your work." I mean there's a million ways that it's like where people are like, "Oh yeah. Totally."

And more now than ever, right? In this crazy virus ridden whatever time we're in, more and more people are looking for how to maintain their personal freedom. And this is certainly one way. So I'd say it's catching on, and that's part of the reason for this podcast. So that's how I started to work with a PMA. It involved paperwork and all kinds of things and that large sum of money. And I kept going down the rabbit hole. So I found another organization, and I think they're still around. But I would not recommend them. They're called The Pastoral Medical Association. And so there's kind of this sub group of PMAs or people that know about PMAs which are based on constitutional law. And

then the subset, this pastoral place, is based on kind of more the religious right to choose, right? And being a pastoral provider kind of like a pastor or—I don't know. Whatever. So I was the first midwife to sign up with them. And I felt like, "Okay. Well, this is just another protection mechanism." Maybe it makes sense with the PMA. Maybe it doesn't. But here is another thing that's presented. And I remember doing a long interview with guy that ran it. And they accepted me, whatever that means. And I paid them a monthly fee.

And I still don't entirely know what that was about. But it felt like the thing to do. And I'm pretty sure some other midwives ended up following in my footsteps there. I don't know who is still with them and who is still not. But I eventually cancelled my arrangement with them because I didn't really understand what it was about once I learned more with Jason learning more about PMAs. So that was just another step on the journey. And I think—and anybody out there could correct me if they think they were the first to have a PMA as an unlicensed midwife in a state that requires licensing—but I'm pretty sure. I'm pretty sure I was the first. And I'm happy to see people have also felt it was a good idea for them. And Jason, my husband, as I'll give his link at the end is now actively setting up PMAs for people as well.

So the guy, Carl, I went to is no longer around. I wouldn't recommend that group anyway only because the more I've learned and the more other people have learned and they're the ones, like Jason, setting up these things for people you just naturally get better at it and see the flaws in the previous design. So there isn't a place I would recommend other than Jason because I think he's really knowledgeable, and, of course, he's my husband. So I trust him. And he's been teaching about this. So if you'd like to learn from him and you want to know all the ins and outs because you maybe already heard my story and you're ready for more, then I would go to him. His business address where you can access the PCA 101 class he just did—it's there for purchase. sovereignbusiness.org/PCA101. So that's a class you can purchase that he just did recently where he explains all of the technical details for all of you out there that are like, "This is cool, but I want to know more. Tell me what this is actually about." Go take his class.

And if you resonate with that and you're a midwife, doula, anyone that does hands on work really—acupuncture, chiropractor, medical doctor, anyone—and you feel like you would benefit from learning more and then maybe even setting up your own PMA so that you can work in this manner, then he would be your guy. And I'm really proud of what he's put together so far. I'm really excited about I think how much more beneficial it will be for people than what I initially was exposed to. First of all, not such a high price point. And secondly, he's providing education. So that was always one of my biggest questions. What if? What if? What if some something happens, right? That's the classic question that he, Jason, also gets a million of. Literally all the time. There is no

guarantee, right? Let's just be clear on that. And so if you're someone that's thought of a PMA for your midwifery practice or whatever, doula practice, and you're like, "Well, I need something that's 100%." Then you should not do this because it is not. And nothing in life is honestly. There is no guarantee that we will wake up tomorrow, right?

So we're not talking about that. And I think reframing your ideas around what you would even want this for might be helpful perhaps before you even learn more logistical information because I'm telling you there is a way to do this. I practice openly as a midwife without a license in a state where licensing is required. And it is being done. But there is an inner path to getting there, I believe. So if you're dealing with a lot of fear and, like I said, I totally have been there, so no judgment. If you're dealing with a lot of fear about any of it, not having a license, having a license, being prosecuted, being thrown in jail, that's something you need to work through because simply slapping on a PMA, having a bunch of paperwork, even having counsel from someone that knows a lot, is not going to ultimately fix those inner issues. And ultimately, that inner energy of fear which I hate to say could definitely bring you attention in the way that you don't want actually. So I'm not saying I always felt this way.

In fact, quick story, when I did first set up a PMA, I had a lovely repeat client. So the first time, I had been licensed. Whatever. Great birth. Great family. And then here I am the second time, they didn't care. They wouldn't have cared what was going on paperwork wise. They wanted their midwife again. So she had her birth. She had her labor. And in the middle of her labor, nothing ultimately was wrong. But I remember listening to heart tones, and I don't remember if she had asked me or whatever. And there was something concerning. So ultimately, it was fine. Her baby came out at home. All was well. But there was a moment in her labor when I remember being catapulted into fear inside my body. And I wouldn't wish that on anyone. I think to do this work we need to deal with that. And for me, and this is completely honest, it was a fear of what if. What if this is the time? What if something happens to this baby and I don't have a license and I'm doing this crazy thing and what if it doesn't work? And that was a terrible feeling. And I feel bad that I even had all that running through my body at this woman's birth because it does affect things I'm sure. And sure, it was ultimately fine. But I realized, at that moment, that if I was going to have any fear about working—and, again, it's all just this costume that we put on or not really.

If I was going to have the fear as a licensed midwife, I would have quit. And now, in that moment as an unlicensed midwife that was doing this new thing that's largely unproven and I was going to carry that fear around, I was just going to quit. And I still feel that way. If I ever got to a point for whatever reason that I felt so fearful and I always felt like someone was going to come after me and this wasn't going to work and what if and what about my kids, I would quit because that stress is not worth it. And you can't really show up for women in a state of trust and love for them and for birth if you are secretly

or very openly scared that you are going to get thrown in jail. You really, really, really have to deal with that. And I think that is primarily the issue. It's not really about a PMA. A PMA should, in a perfect world, just support the freedom and truth that you already feel. And I mean this in the best way the righteousness that I feel to do this work—as in it's my right. It's my right to be a woman and serve other women. There is absolutely nothing wrong or bad about what I'm doing in my eyes. It's completely truthful and based in love. I'm not lying to anybody. I'm not hurting anybody. And over the years, I've gotten a lot of community support.

So all of those things are important to me over sitting in this swamp of fear and doubt. And, again, I think it's easy to get into. Along the lines of news and persecutions and midwives being arrested and all this, yeah. It happens. And you can bet they want to tell us every time it does happen because it only makes all of us, and some of us more than others, more scared to do this work and, ultimately, just sit on the sidelines and say, "You know what? I can't. I'm too scared." And I think there is no judgment in that either. If you can admit to yourself, "You know what? PMA or no PMA, I can't afford that risk," then don't do it. Don't do this work. Not right now. You wait. You wait until you get to a place where it's okay or something magical happens in this universe where suddenly people aren't always wanting other people to tell them how it should be. And everybody kind of rises in their self-authority. That would be awesome and ideal. And I think people that are living in this way—and I do feel I'm one and Jason is one—I feel like that's the future. That's the future I want for my children.

Licensing is just this crock of making money for the government and giving the public fewer options. And that's the short version. So again, take our class. Take our new beginner's midwifery course and/or read that book I suggested because you really have to understand and sort of get riled up about the fact that if you admit you are scared of all of these things you also have to admit that you've agreed to them. You've agreed to them because you know why. They make you feel safe. Or it's just programming, right? I grew up in the same world that all of you did, right? I grew up with parents that do all the things correctly. And dot their I's and cross their T's and very much are on the paper trail and very happy to be citizens, quote on quote. But there is another way. And this is really just the beginning. So I've babbled long enough. I'm trying to look here if I have anything major to say.

But I will say yeah. Just one more time. It's not a magic bullet. There's lots to be explored. If you're interested, it's time to learn and dive in because there really is no time like the present for women, especially, to step up and say, "Yes. I'm going to do this work in a way that works for me, that resonates for me. I'm not interested in being told what to do. And I want to do this in a way that is as protective as possible," knowing, of course, that the true protection, the true integrity comes from the inside, not the outside. So to me, the PMA is simply the external reflection, the external version of

being right with myself on the inside. So now that I feel that way—and, again, I didn't, right? Years ago with the license. I was acting out of integrity with myself. Now that I feel in line with my own truth this is the costume. This is the thing I would do. This is the thing I would wear. It's not fool proof. But it is the best that I can do. It is the best way I can outwardly show to the world that I am in charge of myself and that I am free as my tattoo says. May all beings be free.

I truly, truly believe that we are. We are. And we don't need to ask, and we don't need to get approval. We just need to tap in. Tap into the freedom that is already within your soul to be the human that you are meant to be. And along the lines of persecution, prosecution, I've been there. I've been scared. I've seen things happen. I've had friends in jail. I get it. But I'm not going to live with that story in my brain because why? What good does that do? If you are going to do this work. It does you no good to think about all the terrible things that could happen. No different than the way you could do that with any part of your life. You could think about all the terrible things that could happen to your children, right? Why? That's not energy that you want to manifest, right? You want to manifest health and wellness and abundance. Stay there. Stay in that vibration. The minute you start slipping into all the terrible ways this could look, you got to do something about it. Or, again, just don't do this work. That's a totally legitimate answer.

But there are so many women, I think, that might be encouraged perhaps by this advice. And I know it's a little aggressive, but I feel really strongly about combating the fear because there are so many talented people, many of you out there, who were made to be midwives. You were made to do this work. And the programming is the part that requires our attention. So I feel really, really passionate about that obviously. And yeah. The fear. Yeah. Don't focus on it. It's not something that deserves our attention any longer. If you believe in past lives, we've all been burned down. We've all been there. We've done that, and here we are again. And is that really the worst thing that could happen? And I remember thinking back a long time ago that being thrown in jail would be the absolute worst thing that could ever happen to me. And I guess I just don't feel that way anymore. I'd survive it. I'd know that for whatever reason that was my life's path and that was the lesson I needed just like this whole licensing saga was perfect. It was not fun. And it was hard in a lot of ways, but I wouldn't change it because if I hadn't been through that I wouldn't have the lessons I have. So I think it's believing that the path is perfect, staying on track with your energy, and putting it in perspective.

I have several friends my age and younger who have left this life too soon. And I know that sounds really dramatic. But they were lovely women. And actually, the two that were closest to me were interested in birth work. They both—they both would have been fantastic midwives, and they're not here anymore. And that has nothing to do with this topic of persecution. I'm just saying life is short. You are here to live the life you're meant to live. And if being a midwife is that goal, that passion, that path in this life, then

you'll find a way to do it. And I hope that this little piece of information and my own journey can really inspire you and have you know that it is possible.

So a whole hour has gone by. I think I have to be done. But I just want to say, again, that this isn't the magic answer. But if you've been intrigued, now is the time to look into Jason's class. He's working with people one on one. He is, of course, a really compassionate human being. He really knows how to listen. He's kind of like a midwife in his own right. So if you decide to work with him on your own PMA, I know that you will love it. And I know you will understand it to the best of your ability. And you will have your own experience to bring your own truth into this world as far as birth work goes.

So on that note, have a beautiful day. And thanks for listening. Oh, be sure to check out our Social site, again, social.indiebirth.org. We are doing live events there. I have a Midwife Monday. That's on YouTube. I'd really love to see more people there. So to get the event details, you'd want to go to our Social and join for our free and then figure out where that even is. And come. Come join me on Mondays on YouTube. And we'll talk about midwifery there. Have a great day.

(closing music)