



The League of Women Voters of Oregon is a 103-year-old grassroots nonpartisan political organization that encourages informed and active participation in government. We envision informed Oregonians participating in a fully accessible, responsive, and transparent government to achieve the common good. LWVOR Legislative Action is based on advocacy positions formed through studies and member consensus. The League never supports or opposes any candidate or political party.

February 23, 2023

To: [Representative Jason Kropf](#), Chair
[House Committee on Judiciary](#)

Re: [HB 2535](#) – Establishes doula program at Coffee Creek Correctional Facility – **Support**

The League of Women Voters of Oregon strongly supports HB 2535 and offers thanks to Representative Reynolds for bringing this much-needed bill forward. We base our support on our belief that adequate medical and mental health care must be part of any correctional setting. The three sections of this bill will substantially improve the lives of pregnant and postpartum adults at Coffee Creek Correctional Facility and also their children. The preliminary “Whereas” statements should tell you all you need to know about why passage of this bill is of critical importance.

First, the bill establishes a doula program providing an array of doula services to pregnant and postpartum adults in custody, overseen by an on-site pregnancy coordinator. These services would not take the place of health care routinely provided to adults in custody, but “are designed to provide physical, emotional or informational support to a pregnant adult before, during and after delivery of a child.” Secondly, the bill prohibits shackling during labor, childbirth, or postpartum recovery. The adult in custody should be able to hold and nurse the infant without restriction. Lastly, a pregnant or postpartum adult who arrives at a Department of Corrections facility is not required to go through a search that involves removal of clothing or inspection of body cavities, unless there is a concern for safety or suspicion of contraband.

These provisions are a recognition of the need to purge our correctional system of unnecessary and cruel practices that dehumanize individuals. A 2019 [study](#), entitled “Perinatal Nurses’ Experiences With and Knowledge of the Care of Incarcerated Women During Pregnancy and the Postpartum Period,” reported that often “the reason given for shackling was not because the prisoners posed a risk to others, or a flight risk, but simply because “there was a rule or protocol” supporting shackling.”

The League calls for making significant improvements in the way we treat childbirth within carceral settings, and this bill is an excellent start. We urge passage of HB 2535 and thank you for the opportunity to comment on the bill.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Becky Gladstone".

Rebecca Gladstone
LWVOR President

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Marge Easley".

Marge Easley
LWVOR Action Committee