



February 21, 2023

Chair Kropf, Vice-Chairs Andersen and Wallen, and Members of the Committee  
Support HB 2535

On behalf of the American Association of University Women of Oregon (AAUW of OR), we express our strong support for House Bill 2535.

Members of our organization have in the past worked with the women within and on parole from this institution for many years. All of the women incarcerated at Coffee Creek needed help and support to overcome the many challenges in their lives.

Children were a common interest, and most of the inmates were dealing with family-related matters, whether involving pregnancy, recent deliveries or being parents of multiple boys and girls. A major concern for all was how the internal systems and actions of the Correctional Facility impacted them regarding female medical issues and the continuation of contact with their kids while incarcerated. Many reported punitive and unnecessarily rigid rules and attitudes toward them as inmates.

The fact that today we need to address shackling of individuals during labor, childbirth or postpartum recover is shocking and cruel. This practice presents a model that encourages further anger and the possibility of future acting out, rather than instilling dignity and rehabilitation. A doula program will provide a softer, more compassionate approach that could be helpful to those who have endured so much trauma in their lives.

Reproductive health care for incarcerated individuals should be provided in accordance with the same guidelines and recommendations as for those who are not incarcerated. HB 2535 encourages the creation of safe and dignified birthing environments for incarcerated people who give birth in custody and allows these individuals to have the same opportunities to bond with their newborns as nonincarcerated postpartum hospitalized people.<sup>1</sup>

The provision of physical, emotional and informational support to a pregnant adult will not only reach the inmates at Coffee Creek at the time the services are delivered but will benefit inmates' children, their families and our communities far into the future.

We urge passage of HB 2535 and thank you for the opportunity to comment on the bill.

Respectfully Submitted

Claire Berger  
Chair, State Public Policy Committee  
American Association of University Women

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<sup>1</sup> The American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists Committee Opinion, Reproductive Health Care for Incarcerated Pregnant, Postpartum, and Nonpregnant Individuals. July 2021. <https://www.acog.org/clinical/clinical-guidance/committee-opinion/articles/2021/07/reproductive-health-care-for-incarcerated-pregnant-postpartum-and-nonpregnant-individuals>