

Chair Patterson, members of the committee, thank you for your time and the opportunity to testify here today in support of SB 491. For the record, my name is Stacy Ochoa.

My story of trying to build a family spans over the last decade, and is still ongoing. My husband and I face dual factor infertility - a diagnosis where we both have fertility issues. I have severe stage 4 endometriosis, which took nearly a decade of trying to have a family before being diagnosed, and my partner, a rare Mullerian or utricule duct prostatic cyst. What I believe could have made all the difference for us, was our time to proper care. Even before knowing my diagnosis, had we been able to access IVF when we were first made aware of our male factor diagnosis, I think our story could be different and we may very well have been able to start our family by now. Early access to care would have given us a lot more information about our case, and likely positioned us better for success. Instead, we faced several years of navigating costly procedures, not covered by insurance, to try anything possible to build a family while trying to save for IVF, which we needed about 20k to begin. Working for local government and nonprofits at the time of diagnosis, didn't afford us the luxury of that kind of expendable income. We have spent extraordinary amounts of money in the last decade to attempt to build our family, all without any guarantees - because we have a disease that is not covered by our insurance plans. I know it will be mentioned today, but it is worth repeating: infertility is a disease, defined as such by the American Medical Association.

In all cases of Infertility, and really any disease, time is of the essence. But when access to the proper care is based on your ability to pay, it simply comes down to WHO is privileged enough to get that care in a timely manner, or whether they will be able to access it at all. I think Oregon deserves, and can do, better.

So do 20 other states that have already, some dating back to the 1980's, passed some kind of mandate to cover fertility services. These other states demonstrate that Oregon is behind the curve in offering truly comprehensive reproductive health care to all Oregonians. Infertility doesn't discriminate: it affects people regardless of gender, race, sexual orientation, age or political party.

I have come before this committee the last 3 years to share parts of my struggle with this disease and to advocate for everyone in this state facing a similar diagnosis, who is needing access to care. In my efforts to advocate for this mandate, I meet and speak with people facing infertility constantly. I know their stories, and I know personally the deeply painful experience that it is to have your life altered when you face infertility - financially, physically and emotionally. I desperately hope that this is the last year advocates have to stand before the legislature, sharing these traumatic parts of their lives, in hopes that lawmakers will do the right thing for families in Oregon. Please make 2023 the year that Oregon takes a stand as a truly pro family state, and passes SB 491. If you have any doubt about the dire necessity of this legislation, I'd ask you to spend just 5 minutes talking to someone who has faced this life altering disease.

I urge you to vote in favor of SB 491 - and to continue to support its path to passing in the Senate and House. Thank you.

