



**Oregon Commission For Women**

**Advocating for Equity and Diversity throughout Oregon**

Chair Patterson, Vice-Chair Hayden, and Members of the Senate Committee on Health Care,

For the record, my name is Camille Mercier; I am an educated Native American woman, employed full-time, and a Commissioner on the Oregon Commission for Women (OCFW).

OCFW serves the people of Oregon to empower and support women through our special roles as policy advisors to Oregon state policymakers and leaders. The OCFW is a catalyst that empowers partnerships between the state government and women in rural and urban areas to ensure success for all women by addressing issues at the policy level.

I am writing today in support of House Bill 2535, which will establish a doula program for pregnant and postpartum adults in custody at the Coffee Creek Correctional Facility.

I believe that this bill is important in order to give incarcerated mothers an opportunity for positive guidance and expertise during a critical time in their life when bringing a child into this world.

It is commonly known that incarcerated women, particularly women of color, experience a higher rate of complications during pregnancy, delivery, and postpartum. This bill, also known as Better Beginnings for Babies, will directly impact the mother and baby, addressing generational trauma and developing safe, humane, and appropriate medical protocols. Adding a doula to the medical team that provides care, delivery, and postpartum services for incarcerated women will allow each baby born the best possible start in their life.

I urge the committee members to join OCFW in supporting better beginnings for babies and humane treatment for our incarcerated mothers by voting yes on HB 2535.

Sincerely,

Camille Mercier

Vice-Chair, Oregon Commission for Women

#### Oregon Commission for Women

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