

Submitter: Sonia Sosa
On Behalf Of:
Committee: Senate Committee On Early Childhood and Behavioral Health
Measure, Appointment or Topic: SB692

For the last 14 years I have been providing primary care in an FQHC in SE Portland. I provide full spectrum primary care along with maternity care. For many years I was the only provider of color providing prenatal care services to our patients at our clinic. Approximately 5 years ago one of our highly educated employees established care with me for her prenatal care. As a black woman she desired care from another BIPOC individual. The first trimester went by without incident but late in her second trimester I received a MyChart message that concerned me greatly. I immediately reached out to the patient with further questions and ended up sending her straight to labor and delivery. In the end she was diagnosed with a life threatening complication of pregnancy and immediate delivery was recommended. Both mom and baby are doing excellently now but it terrified me how close she was to become a statistic. Maternal morbidity and mortality for black and brown birthing people are abysmal in this country. We have solid evidence that just having people on the care team who are also BIPOC can improve these numbers but these resources can be hard to obtain. After this incident I developed a program which served to make doulas available to all of our patients regardless of insurance. The doula group we partnered with is working to improve access to doulas of color and to improve access to doulas for all patients. Although our numbers have been too low to allow for any statistical analysis the patient experiences have been wonderful.

Additionally I have spent the last 10 years working with Project Nurture- a program which provides prenatal and postpartum care to patients with substance use disorder. This program also relies heavily on patient support through doulas as well as ideally with peer mentors in order to support healthy pregnancies and in order to increase the number of infants and children who remain with their birthing parents. We see lives changed on a regular basis through this program, it is some of the most rewarding work that I am honored to be able to participate in.

Maternal morbidity and mortality are unfortunately high and only getting worse in this country, it is imperative that we make changes now that start to shift the mark. Thank you
Sonia