

Submitter: Hilary Nichols
On Behalf Of:
Committee: Senate Committee On Early Childhood and Behavioral Health
Measure, Appointment or Topic: SB693

Dear Senate Early Childhood and Behavioral Health Committee,

My name is Hilary Nichols and I work at a community health center in SE Portland as a clinic-based Community Organizer. My work aims to tackle health equity issues upstream, focusing on laws, policy, and regulations that make our communities sick.

I urge you to support SB 693, because I believe creating this Task Force on the Perinatal Workforce will address the core issue at the root of our current state of health inequality. This core issue is unequal access to power —those with lived expertise of an issue often lack decision-making authority in policies, funding, and public narratives that directly affect them. The problem is not just exclusion but the absence of impacted individuals in leadership roles where key decisions are made. Addressing this requires creating programs that cultivate leadership and intentionally place community members in decision-making spaces, ensuring that those most affected have a real seat at the table.

I believe that SB 693 will achieve its goals of evaluating the current landscape of perinatal services in Oregon, identifying barriers, and developing recommendations because it will create a Task Force with all the necessary insights to achieve transformational change; the task force will include representatives of both the perinatal workforce and representatives of organizations who advocate for infant and maternal health.

Task forces can be highly effective in driving systemic improvement by bringing together diverse partners to focus on a specific issue with clear goals and accountability. They create structured spaces where individuals with different expertise—including those with lived experience—can collaborate, analyze root causes, and develop actionable solutions. By working across sectors, task forces can influence policy, shift institutional practices, and ensure sustained progress through ongoing evaluation and adaptation. Their targeted, time-bound approach allows for both immediate impact and long-term systemic change. This is why SB 693 and the Task Force on the Perinatal Workforce are essential. They will help ensure that every Oregonian has the stability and resources needed during pregnancy and the first year of parenting.

Your consideration of my testimony is much appreciated, and thank you for your work to make a healthier Oregon.