

Submitter: Hilary Nichols  
On Behalf Of:  
Committee: Senate Committee On Early Childhood and Behavioral Health  
Measure, Appointment or Topic: SB691

Dear Senate Early Childhood and Behavioral Health Committee,

My name is Hilary Nichols and I work at a community health center in SE Portland, which happens to be a site of an amazing program called Project Nurture. I urge you to support SB 691 because this legislation will expand critical services (like Project Nurture) that have long demonstrated the role of family medicine in fostering stability, health, and long-term recovery.

Project Nurture, launched in 2015 at OHSU, provides comprehensive, integrated care for pregnant individuals with substance use disorders, addressing critical gaps in access to maternity, pediatric, and addiction treatment. By bringing care directly to methadone clinics and assembling a dedicated team—including doulas, mental health providers, addiction treatment nurses, and DHS liaisons—the program removes barriers to care and supports patients holistically. Participants in Project Nurture are more likely to retain custody of their children, experience lower relapse rates, and remain engaged in medical care, ultimately improving both parent and child health outcomes. To me, the most important part of Project Nurture is that it treats substance use disorder like the health issue it truly is, rather than as "criminal" or as a "moral failing" which only worsens health outcomes.

I have seen firsthand the deep dedication and compassion that Project Nurture providers bring to their work, and I have heard directly from Project Nurture patients how meaningful it is to receive healthcare that is trauma-informed, destigmatized, comprehensive, and kind. SB 691 will allow programs like Project Nurture to expand to areas of critical need, such as rural and underserved communities in Oregon.

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