

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

Dear Senate Early Childhood and Behavioral Health Committee,

My name is Hilary Nichols and I work at a community health center in SE Portland, and am a mom to a beautiful three-year-old child. My baby's birth included an unexpected hospital transfer, a near death experience, and an unplanned c-section. Throughout these traumatizing events, our saving grace was our birth doula, who provided invaluable emotional, physical, and psychological support during and after our birth experience. She advocated for and with us during the entire process. Without her, there's no doubt that our family would have experienced much poorer outcomes, and I believe that every birth in Oregon should be supported by a doula and other invaluable perinatal supports.

This is why I urge you to support SB 692, which will establish a community-based perinatal provider access program to increase access to culturally specific perinatal services and culturally competent perinatal services providers. This legislation will improve how our existing systems work so that they work for more people. We need more doulas, lactation consultants, and other perinatal providers who can address the culturally specific needs of different communities, and I believe this kind of investment in parents and babies in pregnancy and the first moments of life will have enormous returns on the overall health of our community.

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