

Submitter: Erika Van Winkle
On Behalf Of:
Committee: Senate Committee On Early Childhood and Behavioral Health
Measure, Appointment or Topic: SB692

Hello, my name is Erika and I work with Baby Blues Connection, a grassroots nonprofit here in Portland that services the Portland Metro Area, Columbia and Clatsop Counties. We provide peer support to moms, parents and families coping with perinatal mood and anxiety disorders (PMADs) like postpartum depression and anxiety. I first used their support services after the birth of my daughter in 2014. I was having daily panic attacks which landed me in the ER multiple times, and felt like I was the worst Mom. I found a Baby Blues Connection brochure in my hospital packet and called. I spoke with a fellow parent volunteer, and I think I cried the first call because I was so relieved to know I was not alone. I went to their weekly support group for months and this kind of support was integral to my recovery. I also received a referral to see a PMAD informed providers that helped me get on medication to help my intense anxiety symptoms. I started volunteering in 2020 and now I work there helping with communications.

The postpartum period can be one of the most isolating and stressful time for both parents. It is a time that is highly stigmatized, which leads a lot of moms to not reach out for help because society puts a lot of pressure on parents for this to be the "happiest time of their lives." Many of the times it is not, and parents are in desperate need of care. Mentally, financially, and practical support like lactation, sleep etc. especially for parents who lack a strong, local support system.

Community and peer support organizations like ours are vital to the health and safety of families in Oregon. With traditional healthcare systems overrun, and therapists with months long wait lists, are services are a lifeline to parents who have no where else to turn. I fully support the Momnibus to ensure healthy parents and healthy kids. Maternal mental health matters.

Thank you for your time and I appreciate your work on this important issue.
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