

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

Chair Reynolds, members of the committee, my name is Sarah Pytalski. I am the mother of two girls, ages 1 and 3, and a proud resident of Roseburg. I am writing in support of SB 692 and SB 693. Both bills hold the potential for significantly improving maternal-child health outcomes where I live and across our state. I am in fierce support of the expanded coverage for doula services, postpartum doula services and lactation consultations included in the bill. Contrary to what many believe about the birth and postpartum period, I found it was not “intuitive.” The transition to motherhood is a deeply humbling and vulnerable time of one’s life. And I can say definitively that were it not for a friend connecting me to a local midwife and lactation counselor, I would not have found the skills and confidence to successfully breastfeed my firstborn. My postpartum journey would have looked entirely different. The support systems that surround a family in the perinatal period are critical for their health— physically, mentally, emotionally. And that’s not just for the mother. For both of my births, I knew I wanted a doula. The first time, there were none serving in Douglas County. The second time, there were more, but then cost became a barrier. I was fortunate to connect with a postpartum doula who was taking on pro bono clients as a means of completing their certification. Between 2021 and 2023, there are now more than 10 doulas organizing and serving our area. I know this because as a result of my birth and postpartum experiences, I became active locally with our local breastfeeding coalition and perinatal taskforce— and I began compiling an inventory of doulas in Douglas County. I also volunteer in hosting outdoor hikes through OutGrown, a program designed to connect parents of children 0-5, build relationships with nature as a way to improve mental and physical health, prevent adverse childhood experiences, and encourage environmental awareness from birth. Through all of these engagements, I have heard stories of struggle and overwhelm. Parents who feel lost in our community before they reached out for, or were referred to, support. And even when those service connections are made, there are not enough people in our perinatal workforce to meet the demand. That’s why I am now on my own journey to become a THW certified full-spectrum doula. It is not just my own belief that more doulas in our community will support better outcomes for our families— it’s expert-held opinion (County Health Rankings What Works for Health: <https://www.countyhealthrankings.org/strategies-and-solutions/what-works-for-health/strategies/community-based-doulas>). Doulas are known to improve birth outcomes, and available evidence suggests they may reduce low birthweight births, preterm births, the need for cesareans, increase breastfeeding initiation, and reduce postpartum anxiety. Again, especially where I live, in a rural county the size of Connecticut, a place where more than half of families are struggling to make ends

meet, and where barriers to maternal-child health remain high despite the undaunted efforts of our perinatal workforce, this legislation cannot come soon enough. I urge you to support the passage of SB 692 and 693.