

Submitter: Matthew Richardson
On Behalf Of:
Committee: Senate Committee On Early Childhood and Behavioral Health
Measure, Appointment or Topic: SB694

Dear Chair Reynolds, Vice-Chair Anderson, and members of the Senate Committee on Early Childhood and Behavioral Health,

My name is Matthew Richardson, and I am a government affairs manager for the Nurse-Family Partnership home visiting model. As an organization that is deeply involved with supporting maternal health, I am writing to share our support for SB 694.

Nurse-Family Partnership (NFP) is an evidence-based nurse home visiting program that partners specially-trained registered nurses with expecting parents, starting early in the pregnancy and continuing through the child's second birthday. With the support of an NFP nurse, families experience better pregnancy outcomes, improved child health and development, and greater economic self-sufficiency. Parents, babies, families, and communities all benefit from these proven services.

One of NFP's top goals is to help families improve their economic self-sufficiency. This is largely because children facing economic barriers are more likely to have worse health outcomes than children born into higher income families, and these disparities worsen into adulthood.

Child health is a driver of economic mobility, improved health in the early years of childhood improves educational attainment, adult earning potential, and upward mobility over generations. Poverty is an important determinant of birthweight, infant mortality, social emotional and language development, nutrition, chronic illness, environmental exposure, and injury. Toxic stress associated with child poverty has detrimental effects on neurodevelopment.

We recently saw an example of what is possible regarding reductions to child poverty when policy changes are made. The expansion of the federal child tax credit during the pandemic cut child poverty by 46% to a record low of 5.2% nationally. Oregon had a 46.3% decrease in child poverty with this expansion. We should make the necessary changes to make such decreases ongoing.

Thriving children and families lead to thriving communities and a strong society. As a program heavily invested in helping families thrive, Nurse-Family Partnership supports SB 694.