

Chair Reynolds, Vice-Chair Anderson, and Members of the Committee,

My name is Julia Gutierrez and I am a Grant Project Manager, Full Spectrum Doula, and Certified Lactation Education Specialist with Daisy CHAIN. I am writing today to express my strong support for Senate Bill 692, which will increase access to culturally specific perinatal services in Oregon.

Perinatal mortality and morbidity is a public health issue in Oregon. The Oregon Maternal Mortality and Morbidity Review Committee reviewed pregnancy related deaths between 2018 and 2020, concluding that over half were preventable. Furthermore, they stress that for every pregnancy related death, there are fifty times the amount of individuals who suffer severe perinatal complications. In response, the Committee recommends five actions to prevent perinatal mortality and morbidity, with the number one action to ensure culturally specific coordination of care throughout pregnancy, labor, and postpartum.

OHP currently covers birth doula services, but the majority of pregnancy related deaths occur in the postpartum period. SB 692 would increase the availability and affordability of postpartum doula and lactation services, creating equitable opportunities for communities impacted by social and economical barriers. As a community based doula, I have witnessed the impact that culturally specific care has on an individual. They feel safer and more secure, which improves their psychological experience as well as their physiological health.

Doulas are an essential component to the perinatal healthcare workforce. A doula is a compassionate and active witness continuously through the full spectrum of perinatal experiences. A doula restores power to individuals, ensuring that their voice is always centered, and that the level of care they receive reflects the experience they are having. They see, they listen, and they respond offering as much or as little support as needed, advocating for respectful and responsive care when necessary. A doula adapts to the person's needs, to meet an individual where they are on their journey. A doula is a bridge in the community, providing warm connections for relevant resources and referrals to meet their client's needs. A doula has the time to offer these essential components of the healthcare system that medical providers simply do not have the time to fulfill.

SB 692 would help fill gaps in the Oregon perinatal workforce and improve the lives of Oregonians. I appreciate the work you do to support Oregon's children and families, and I urge you to vote yes on SB 692.

Sincerely,
Julia Gutierrez
Grant Project Manager
Daisy CHAIN
Eugene, Oregon