

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

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

My name is Sarah Reppenhagen and I am a pediatric occupational therapist and a mom. I've had the honor of working with families for the past 20 years and in this time have seen what an impact adequate and unfortunately inadequate support means for parents, and how this can shape their child's development. I am writing today to express my strong support for Senate Bill 692, which will expand and strengthen Oregon's perinatal workforce.

In the best of circumstances, parenting is damn hard. Parenting is WAY harder for those facing financial insecurity, with the reality or threat of housing instability, and insufficient quality health care, which includes mental health supports for the 1 in 5 moms or 1 in 10 dads who experience Perinatal mood and anxiety disorders.

As Oregonians, we face the stark reality that maternal and infant mortality remain unacceptably high for all women and babies, with the highest for marginalized communities, particularly black, indigenous and rural families. These deaths are largely preventable. We can do better. If we value the lives of women and babies, we HAVE to do better.

SB 692 prioritizes access to essential perinatal supports for mothers, expanding the perinatal workforce with culturally responsive doulas, midwives, and lactation consultants. This type of support is essential. Babies do not and can not exist in isolation. They need to be cared for by others to survive and for that to happen, we need to care for the carers, the parents, who are THE most influential factor in not only their survival, but in their capacity to thrive.

How can parents expect to do this when faced with not only the transition to parenthood, but with poverty, perinatal depression, addiction, poor health and no safety net? Any one of these stressors impacts their child's development, let alone when they are compounded, which is the reality for so many families. Stress begets stress and to combat traumatic experiences we need buffers. Perinatal supports, like doulas, lactation providers and midwives offer these protective factors, acting to combat, or coexist alongside, adverse experiences moms (and subsequently babies) often experience in the perinatal period.

On an economic scale and a human scale, we can't afford to not support some of the

most vulnerable Oregonians. While Babies can't yet speak, and moms are not often heard, voting YES on SB 692 lends your voice show them they matter.

Thank you,

Sarah Reppenhagen