



Support Senate Bill 691
Senate Committee on Early Childhood and Behavioral Health
February 18th, 2025

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

My name is Arielle Hacker and I am the Strategic Initiatives Coordinator at Prevent Child Abuse Oregon (PCA Oregon) - a statewide nonprofit dedicated to the prevention of child abuse and neglect through upstream and comprehensive prevention strategies. On behalf of PCA Oregon, I respectfully submit this testimony in support of Senate Bill 691 to expand the availability of integrated maternal substance use and mental health treatment.

As a former mental health and addictions counselor, I have supported hundreds of individuals who have been devastatingly impacted by the addiction and mental health crisis - many of them parents, caregivers, grandparents, and children. The rippling impacts addiction has across the family system, across generations, is profound and is felt by thousands of children in Oregon. According to the 2023 Oregon Child Welfare Data Book, over 161,000 calls were made to the Oregon Child Abuse Hotline and the leading family stress factor contributing to child maltreatment was parental/caregiver substance use.¹

In Oregon, the need for substance use and mental health treatment far exceeds the support and services available to Oregonians.² The lack of treatment options available for integrated substance use disorder and behavioral health for parents/caregivers causes lasting trauma for children. Children born to people with substance use disorders are at an increased risk for childhood substance use and for child welfare system involvement.^{3 4} In Oregon, 51.4% of children placed in foster care were placed with parental substance use disorder as a major contributing factor.⁵

Integrated prenatal medical care, substance use disorder treatment, and housing-based supports through programs like Project Nurture or Nurture Oregon have shown decreases in foster care placements in the first year of life, decreased risk of child maltreatment, and increases in the number of prenatal visits.⁶ These programs produce cost savings due to fewer foster placements and reduction in child welfare system involvement.

¹ <https://www.oregon.gov/odhs/data/cwdata/cw-data-book-2023.pdf>

² <https://mhanational.org/issues/2024/mental-health-america-adult-data>

³ <https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/10.1111/add.16127>

⁴ <https://www.zerotothree.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/03/Policy-Brief-Parental-Substance-Use-and-Child-Welfare-Final-508.pdf>

⁵ <https://www.oregon.gov/odhs/data/cwdata/cw-data-book-2023.pdf>

⁶ Vartanian K, Jones K, Buckley RE, McMenemy K, Sanchez K. Project Nurture Final Report. 2018.

PCA Oregon partners with over 40 community-based organizations, state agencies, and advocacy coalitions to actualize our vision for an Oregon where all kids and families are living happy and purposeful lives with hope for the future. This vision can not be achieved if our youngest Oregonians and their families do not have the comprehensive, community-based supports in their children's earliest years of life.

Reflecting on my experience as a mental health and addictions counselor, I recall several instances where parents and their children both sought treatment for substance use disorder simultaneously. This crisis is deeply intergenerational. It is imperative for policymakers to implement legislation - like SB 691 - that supports both parents/caregivers and their children, thereby disrupting these cycles and enhancing outcomes for our youngest Oregonians.

Thank you for your ongoing support of Oregon's children and families.

Sincerely,

Arielle Hacker

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Strategic Initiatives Coordinator

Prevent Child Abuse Oregon